NEWS RELEASE

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On Eve of Midterms, More Than 150 Officials and Leaders Draw a Line: "Our Democracy Is Not Negotiable"

Elections administrators, state legislators, Republican and Democratic leaders, faith leaders, and national civil rights organizations from 25 states sign NALEO's seven nonpartisan principles for free and fair elections

LOS ANGELES — With Election Day tomorrow and millions of ballots already cast, more than 150 elected officials, election administrators, and civic leaders from 25 states have signed on to the Our Democracy Is Not Negotiable campaign, launched by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) on Oct. 22.

The campaign is built around seven nonpartisan principles that set a clear standard for every stage of the election, from keeping eligible voters on the rolls to certifying results and swearing in winners on time.

NALEO's national board leadership, led by President Brian Colón, developed the principles after a year that has tested the basics of democracy, from fights over access to voters' personal data, to proposed changes in how mail ballots are delivered, to concerns about intimidation at the polls. Many of these questions have ended up in court, a reminder that these protections cannot be taken for granted.

The principles put those protections in writing for the more than 36 million Latinos eligible to vote and for every eligible voter, in this election and every one after, regardless of which party holds power. The seven principles are:

1. **Every eligible voter stays on the rolls.**
2. **A ballot requested is a ballot delivered.**
3. **States and localities run elections.**
4. **Every voting site is safe ground.**
5. **The people who run our elections serve without fear.**
6. **Every valid vote is counted, and results are certified on time.**
7. **Winners take office on time.**

Signatories span many levels of government and corners of civic life, including:

- **State legislators and caucuses:** legislators from 11 states, including Senate leaders from Arizona, Illinois, Michigan, and New Mexico; the California Latino Legislative Caucus, the Arizona Latino Legislative Caucus, the Arizona Legislative Black Caucus, and the Kansas Latino Legislative Caucus; and the chair of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus in Texas
- **Elections administrators:** county and city election officials from California, Colorado, New Jersey, and Rhode Island

- **Local officials and associations:** county leaders, mayors, and councilmembers, along with the Latino Caucus of California Counties, the League of California Cities Latino Caucus, and Hispanic Elected Local Officials
- **National organizations:** the League of Women Voters of the United States, UnidosUS, National Latino Evangelical Coalition, Hispanic Federation, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, Mi Familia Vota, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, the Arab American Institute, and the National Partnership for New Americans

Sign-on remains open, and the list of signatories will keep growing with every election. The full list is available at naleoinc.org/elections-principles.

Voters who run into problems do not have to face them alone. The NALEO Educational Fund's free, bilingual hotline, **1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (1-888-839-8682)**, is the official Spanish-language hotline of the national Election Protection coalition, the nation's largest nonpartisan voter protection effort. Live operators help callers in English and Spanish work through problems as they happen, whether a voter is told they are not on the rolls, has a question about a mail ballot, or needs to know where to vote or what ID to bring. The hotline has fielded more than 700,000 calls since its launch. It has extended hours today and will run from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. ET (4:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. PT) on Election Day, live from NALEO Educational Fund headquarters in Los Angeles.

Selected statements from signatories:

Hon. Brian S. Colón; NALEO Board President; Former New Mexico Statewide Elected Official and Current New Mexico Public Records Commissioner: "Free and fair elections are not a partisan issue — they are the foundation of our democracy. NALEO's core principles reflect the standards every leader, regardless of party, should uphold. We are calling on public officials and stakeholders nationwide to stand with us in defense of the process that makes self-governance possible. This is our line in the sand. Regardless of who wins or loses, elections must be administered with integrity, results must be certified, and power must be transferred peacefully. That is not negotiable — and NALEO will hold every leader to that standard."

Mike Madrid, Republican Political Strategist: "As a Republican strategist, I've had a front-row seat to just how much elections matter — and how critical it is that the officials who run them have clear, principled guardrails to stand behind. NALEO's seven basic principles aren't a partisan document — they're a commonsense baseline that reflects what our laws already require. Every eligible voter deserves to have their ballot counted, and that's not a Democratic value or a Republican value — it's an American one."

Nick Lima, Registrar and Director of Elections, City of Cranston, RI: "Election officials have a sworn duty to uphold the law, and our laws are expressly written to protect the voters. NALEO's seven basic principles have always formed the foundation of my work as an elections administrator, just as they do for my colleagues around the country. The reason is simple: these non-partisan, common-sense principles are deeply rooted in the very election laws I am sworn to uphold."

Celina Stewart, CEO, League of Women Voters of the United States: "The strength of civic participation in America is measured not just by holding elections, but whether we honor

the will of voters. Free and fair elections depend on a shared commitment to the integrity of the democratic process, from election administration all the way through certification and the peaceful transfer of power. The League of Women Voters is proud to stand with NALEO and its bipartisan membership in affirming these principles."

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC): "Making sure people can vote is important for defending democracy. As evangelical pastors and community leaders, we want to always be mindful that after elections, we remain neighbors."

Hon. Adrian Garcia; NALEO Board Secretary; Commissioner, Harris County, Precinct 2, TX: "As voters head to the polls tomorrow, the basics of our democracy must hold: voters choose their leaders, ballots are cast without fear, and results are certified on time. As an officer of NALEO, I helped launch this campaign because Latino leaders have a responsibility to defend those basics in this election and every one that follows. I'm proud to be among the first to sign, and I'm calling on leaders in Harris County, across Texas and throughout the nation to join us."

Additional statements of support

NALEO leadership

Erica Bernal-Martinez, CEO, NALEO and NALEO Educational Fund: "As the 2026 midterm elections are underway, NALEO is issuing a clear and unambiguous standard: every eligible vote must be counted, every election worker must be protected, and every winner must take office. These are not aspirations — they are requirements. We are asking leaders across the country to put their names behind that commitment — because the strength of our democracy depends on whether those in power are willing to defend it when it matters most."

Hon. Alejandra Sotelo-Solis, Chair, NALEO Educational Fund Board of Directors; Member, UC Regents Selection Advisory Committee, CA: "So much of what our communities have built — the representation, the resources, the rights — depends on the integrity of the democratic process. And that process only works when every eligible voter can cast their ballot without fear, every valid vote is counted, and every winner takes office. These principles are a commitment to protecting exactly that. The breadth of support they've drawn reflects something important: this isn't about partisan politics. It's about fortifying our democracy — and ensuring that the progress our communities have made is never undermined by a failure to defend the process that made it possible."

Hon. Jaime R. Patiño; NALEO Board Member; President, Hispanic Elected Local Officials (HELO); Vice Mayor, City of Union City, CA: "At a time of such polarization in our politics, it is imperative that every eligible voter stays on the rolls, that people are able to vote without fear and that every valid vote is counted. That is why I have signed on to NALEO's Seven Principles for free and fair elections. We as Elected Officials have a duty to fight for integrity in our elections."

Hon. Lisa Calderon; NALEO Educational Fund Board Member; California State Assemblymember, District 56: "Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, and voters deserve nothing less. These principles matter because they establish a

clear, commonsense standard that every elections official can stand behind — and every voter can count on. Building that kind of broad consensus is exactly what this moment calls for."

Hon. Raymond G. Sanchez, Former Speaker, New Mexico House of Representatives; Former NALEO Board President: "Part of the formation of NALEO was based on the proposition that voting rights were fundamental to the opportunity to participate in public discourse and elect those who represent our values. Congressman Edward R. Roybal and others launched the organization to educate fellow Latinos and Latinas about these basic rights and how to exercise them. NALEO's continued efforts, including these elections principles, are particularly important today."

Hon. E. Junior Maldonado, Hudson County Clerk, NJ; Former NALEO Board President: "I stand by NALEO's Election Principles because in this country the true strength of a democracy rests on the integrity of its elections. Fair, open, and transparent voting processes ensure that every eligible voice is heard, every valid ballot is accurately counted, and the results are universally trusted. By defending a secure and accessible vote, we protect the foundational principle of self-government and reinforce the public trust that holds our society together. Safeguarding the integrity of the ballot box is not a partisan issue; it is a shared civic duty that we should all respect and cherish."

Former and current state legislators

Hon. Richard Polanco, Former California State Senator: "I spent decades fighting to ensure Latinos were represented at every level of government — including authoring the California Voting Rights Act in 2002. That work has always started with the ballot box. NALEO's Elections Principles reflect a simple truth that should be beyond debate: every eligible voter deserves to cast their ballot without fear, and every valid vote must be counted. These are not new ideas. They are the foundation this organization was built on, and they are worth defending again today."

Hon. Flavio Bravo, State Senator, Arizona State Senate, District 26: "Now more than ever, we need to stand up for our democracy, and that starts at the ballot box. Every eligible voter deserves to cast their vote freely and without fear. There is no place for violence or intimidation against voters, election workers, or candidates. I'm proud to join leaders from both parties in standing together to protect our elections, respect the results, and make sure every voice is heard. Democracy works when we trust the process and respect the will of the people."

Hon. Mariana Sandoval, State Representative, Arizona House of Representatives, District 23: "Our communities deserve elections they can trust — and for the families and workers I represent, that trust is everything. Every eligible voter should be able to participate without fear, every ballot should be counted, and every result should be honored. NALEO's Elections Principles lay out exactly that standard, and I'm proud to sign on."

Hon. Cinthia Zermeño Moore, Assemblymember, Nevada State Assembly, District 11: "As the first Mexican-born woman elected to the Nevada Legislature, I know how important it is for every eligible voter to have a voice. Protecting voting rights, ensuring fair and accessible elections, and strengthening public trust are essential to our democracy. These principles reaffirm our responsibility to ensure every community can participate freely and without intimidation."

Hon. Cristina Castro, State Senator, Illinois Senate, District 22: "The hard-fought right to vote is something we must not take for granted. The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials' election principles clearly outline the standards that must be upheld to ensure a fair election where every voter's voice is heard. The seven principles named by NALEO provide necessary insight to the possible barriers that may arise as a resident casts their ballot."

Elections administrators

Armando Salud-Ambriz, MPA, CERA, REO, Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters, Nevada County, CA: "Free, fair, accessible, and secure elections should never be a partisan issue. As a County Clerk-Recorder and Registrar of Voters, I proudly stand behind NALEO's Seven Elections Principles because public trust is earned through transparency, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the people we serve. Our democracy belongs to all of us, and protecting it is a responsibility we all share."

Hon. Christopher Saenz, City Clerk, City of Baldwin Park, CA: "Our vote is our voice, and every voice deserves to be heard. As an elected official, I am committed to ensuring our Latino community and all Los Angeles County residents have confidence in the integrity of our elections and access to the information and resources they need to exercise their right to vote. I am grateful to NALEO for its continued education and support, which equip elected officials to strengthen voter participation in our communities. Every voice matters, and every vote counts."

County and local officials

Hon. Luis Alejo, Supervisor, District 1, Monterey County, CA: "When Latinos vote, we honor the sacrifices of parents and grandparents, and all those who fought for our civil rights. Protecting the integrity of our elections means ensuring every eligible voter can participate without fear, every vote is counted fairly, and election workers can serve without intimidation. Our voice is our power, and our democracy grows stronger when Latino voters use it."

Hon. Dawn Ortiz-Legg, Supervisor, District 3, San Luis Obispo County, CA: "NALEO's Seven Principles of Democracy offer a vital reminder that a democratic society is never guaranteed; rather, it demands continuous effort and unyielding vigilance over our legal institutions. As we approach the 2026 midterm elections, we are witnessing an unprecedented mobilization of the Hispanic electorate. That work belongs to all of us, and these principles are a meaningful step in that direction."

Hon. Ellen Kamei, Councilmember, City of Mountain View, CA: "The City of Mountain View is a 'Community for All,' which means ensuring that every member of our community has a voice and an opportunity to participate in our democracy. Throughout my service on the Mountain View City Council, I have worked to strengthen civic engagement and make local government more accessible and representative of the people we serve. That work begins with protecting the fundamental right to vote. Our elections must be free, fair, accessible, and free from intimidation. These principles are not partisan; they are fundamental to the trust our communities place in our democratic institutions. Protecting our democracy is a shared responsibility, and it is one we must uphold in every election, at every level of government."

Hon. Jackie Butler, Commissioner, El Paso County, Precinct 1, TX: "Free and fair elections are bigger than any candidate or party. I support NALEO's election principles because every eligible voter deserves to cast their ballot without intimidation, have it counted, and trust that the results will be respected. Counties are on the front lines of administering elections, and we must support the election officials and workers who protect the integrity of that process. Our democracy depends on it."

Hon. Daniela Velázquez, Alderwoman, 6th Ward, St. Louis, MO: "Every voter deserves to know their vote will count and their decision will be respected. These basic principles of democracy shouldn't depend on who wins or which party is in power. Elected officials across the country should be able to agree on that, and say so publicly."

Hon. Dr. Monica Sanchez, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Pico Rivera, CA: "In Pico Rivera, our residents deserve to know that their voices count. Every eligible voter, including our naturalized citizens, should be able to stay on the rolls, cast a ballot free from intimidation, and trust that it will be counted. These principles are not about any one party or any one race. They are the basic commitment every local leader owes the community we serve."

Hon. Daniel J. Ramos, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Adelanto, CA: "Every decision we make as local elected officials ultimately traces back to the voters who put us here. When the integrity of that process is in question, everything we do on their behalf is in question too. NALEO's Elections Principles are a reminder that protecting the vote isn't a side issue — it's the issue. I'm proud to sign on and stand with leaders across the country who refuse to take that for granted."

Hon. Charlie Torres, Trustee Secretary, Pflugerville Independent School District, TX: "Free and fair elections are the foundation of every level of public service, including the classrooms and school systems we're responsible for. That's why I'm proud to sign on to NALEO's Elections Principles."

National and community organizations

Katharine Pichardo, President & CEO, Latino Victory Project: "Voting is not only a constitutional right, it's also the bedrock of our democracy, and it's our duty to protect it. Most recently, our strength has been tested with threats of voter purges, challenges to the mail-in ballot system, and fears of intimidation at the ballot box. This is why civil and civic rights organizations are taking action to ensure that our elections remain safe, secure, and accessible in 2026 and beyond. We owe it to our future generations to safeguard our democracy in the face of challenges and to ensure that every eligible voter's constitutional right to vote is protected."

Frankie Miranda, President and CEO, Hispanic Federation: "Hispanic Federation has spent more than three decades empowering Latino communities to fully participate in civic life — and that work depends on elections that are free, fair, and trusted. We are proud to stand with NALEO and the growing coalition of officials and leaders committed to ensuring that every eligible voter can make their voice heard in this election and every one that follows. Our communities have fought hard for a seat at the table. Protecting the democratic process is how we keep it."

Alfredo Pedroza, Board Member, Equality California; Board Member, HONOR PAC: "Democracy is protected by the people who show up for it. I have signed the NALEO Elections Principles because the vote does not belong to any party or any administration. It belongs to the people. Every citizen, including the newest among us, has earned the right to cast a ballot and to have it counted. We are not going to wait for permission to defend the system that makes this possible. We will not look away, we will not be quiet, and we will not be outlasted."

Sindy Benavides, Executive Director, Aquí: The Accountability Movement: "At a moment when so many families are living with fear and uncertainty, we cannot allow fear to silence our voices or undermine our democracy. The right to vote, to be heard, and to have our voices respected is something generations before us fought to protect. We owe it to them, to our beloved communities, and to the generations coming after us to defend those rights with courage and conviction. This is bigger than any political party or election. It is about the kind of country we want to be and the future we are building together. I stand with NALEO because our democracy belongs to all of us, and protecting it is a responsibility we all share."

Maya Berry, Executive Director, Arab American Institute: "Free and fair elections are a hallmark of American democracy and of great importance to Arab American communities. Having faced exclusion from the political process that required us to fight for our spot at the civic engagement table, we understand the importance of being an engaged political constituency and of using our voting power to voice our concerns. However, recent attempts to interfere with elections — including the purging of eligible voters from voter rolls, widespread voter intimidation, and threats to mail-in voting — have jeopardized the voting rights of all Americans, including Arab Americans. NALEO is a key partner in the fight for an inclusive democracy, and AAI is proud to endorse their election principles because they uphold the integrity of our elections and protect the rights of every voter."

Nicole Melaku, Executive Director, National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA): "On this pivotal day for our nation, our network of over 70 of the country's leading immigrant advocacy organizations sends a loud and clear message, the American people, including naturalized Americans, elect our representatives, not the other way around. The principles outlined by NALEO ground us in the promise of a fair and functional democracy, where voting locations are safe ground and every valid vote will be counted."

Karla Pineda, Executive Director, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA): "Our democracy is strongest when every eligible voter can exercise their right to vote freely, safely, and without fear. For Latino workers and working families, these protections are essential to ensuring our communities have a voice in the decisions that shape our everyday lives — from our kitchen tables to our workplaces. LCLAA stands with NALEO in defending free and fair elections, respecting the will of the voters, and protecting the democratic principles that must guide every election, regardless of who is on the ballot."

Charlotte "CC" Castillo, Managing Director, Poderistas: "Latinas are one of the fastest-growing forces in American democracy, including naturalized citizens who earned this vote with intention. These principles protect that promise at every step: keeping eligible voters on the rolls, delivering every ballot under rules set in advance, and making every polling place and counting center safe ground. At Poderistas, we believe civic power grows where people can trust the process. That trust is what's on the line."

Sonja Diaz, Founder & Managing Director, Unseen: "Democracy requires more than the promise of a vote. NALEO's election principles make clear what more is required. For far too long, our institutions, including those that administer the most fundamental right – the right to vote – have been permitted to arbitrarily deny too many Americans a voice in their future. Protecting the integrity of our elections is central to America's next 250 years."

Jerry Gonzalez, CEO, GALEO & GALEO Impact Fund, Inc.: "GALEO has spent more than two decades bringing Latino voters into the civic process across Georgia — and that work depends on voters being able to trust that the system will treat them fairly. These principles are important because they establish the foundation that trust is built on, and the broad consensus forming around them sends a powerful message: that protecting every voter's right to participate is a commitment that transcends party and geography."

Peter Manzo, President & CEO, United Ways of California: "For over 130 years, United Way has worked to bring communities together, to bridge gaps, to find common ground to drive substantial positive change. There is a deep connection between voting and participating in community life. Voting is how we express our hopes and dreams for our shared future. It is also the most fundamental right for all American citizens, upon which all other rights and liberties depend. We are proud to endorse the NALEO Election Principles."

Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D., Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Professor Emeritus, University of New Mexico: "NALEO's principles explicitly highlight what steps secure our citizens' constitutional voice in our democracy. Voters have no voice or control over the direction of our democracy at any level without free, fair, and secure elections. Those who govern must do so with the people's consent, expressed through transparent, secure voting; otherwise, our democracy is being undermined."

Miranda Galindo, Senior Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF: "Every eligible voter should be able to vote without fear, and every valid ballot should count. For more than five decades, LatinoJustice has worked to protect access to the ballot and fair representation for Latinos and all our communities. We will not let voters be intimidated or erased from this election."

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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 8,000 Latino elected and appointed officials.