

Contacts: Daniel Leyva (347) 776-8057

Frankie Miranda (212) 233-8955



INTERFAITH & COMMUNITY LEADERS UNITE TO ENCOURAGE LATINO PARTICIPATION IN 2010 CENSUS

PRESS CONFERENCE MARKS 30 DAY COUNTDOWN TO DECENNIAL COUNT

New York, NY – Monday, March 1, 2010 – Marking the start of the 30-day countdown to the 2010 Census, a diverse group of Latino elected, religious and community leaders gathered today at City Hall to highlight their faith in the 2010 Census and encourage all Latinos - regardless of their immigration status or economic situation – to be counted. Convened by the Hispanic Federation and the Latino Religious Leadership Project of the Latino Commission on AIDS, the press conference emphasized the following theme: *Voices of Faith in Support of the 2010 Census, Participate with Faith and Confidence.*

"Ensuring a full and accurate count of the Latino population is critical to the future progress of New York State. The role our faith-based and nonprofit leaders play in motivating people to fill out and return the census forms is essential to helping us achieve that goal," said Madame Secretary Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, New York's Secretary of State.

"In a matter of weeks, households across the city will be receiving one of the most important documents they will be given this decade: the 2010 Census Questionnaire Form. This form is not just an opportunity for our families to be counted and recognized, it is a direct and simple way for everyone to give back and contribute to their communities," stated New York City Council Member Melissa Mark Viverito.

"The 2010 Census will directly impact the kinds of funding and electoral opportunities our community will have over the next decade. It is simply one of the most important economic and political issues facing Latinos today. We stand united with our religious and elected leaders in saying to Latino New Yorkers that census participation is not only easy and safe but it is critical for the well-being of our community," affirmed Lillian Rodríguez López, President of the Hispanic Federation.

"Through our Latino Religious Leadership Program we are mobilizing religious leaders to take action on the Census. We will work together to ensure that Latinos get counted and our community receives its fair share of resources for neighborhood improvements, public health, education, transportation and much more, said Guillermo Chacon, President of the Latino Commission on AIDS.

- MORE -

The voices of our Religious leaders are important as gatekeepers and as sources of faith, trust, support and guidance for our communities. Their role in supporting the Census provides a sign of confidence for our communities to fully participate in this important event that takes place every ten years.

"We call on all our brothers and sisters in the clergy to stand with us and ensure that every member of our community completes the census form," said Reverend Francisco Cañas, National Coordinator for Latino Hispanic Ministries, General Board for Global Ministries, United Methodist Church.

"We want our entire community to know – residents and undocumented residents alike - that you have nothing to fear and a lot to gain from filling out the Census form. It is 100% confidential and cannot be used against anyone by any government agency or court," stated Moises Perez, Founder and President of Alianza Dominicana.

Other speakers included *Monsignor Kenneth Smith*, of "Saint Catalina of Genoa" Catholic Church; *Rev. Raymond Rivera*, Founder and CEO, Latino Pastoral Action Center; *Rev. Marc Rivera*, Senior Pastor of Primitive Christian Church; *Rev. Hector Laporta*, First United Methodist Church on 4th Avenue; *Rev. Domingo de La Cruz*, "Rock of Salvation" Church of God; *Rev. Bishop Luis Paniagua*, "Jesus Christ the Saviour" Pentecostal Church; *Rev. Raquel Algarin*, Lower East Side, Harm Reduction Center; and the *Rev. Jose Laboy*, "Mission in the City" Lutheran Church.

The 2010 Census will be bilingual, offering a double-sided English and Spanish version, which, for the first time, will be mailed directly to Spanish-dominant neighborhoods identified by the Census Bureau. In addition, it will be the shortest Census questionnaire in history, with 10 questions that should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The official count takes place on April 1, 2010, but the Census Bureau will begin sending census forms to households across the country in March.

###

The Hispanic Federation is a service-oriented membership organization of 100 Latino health and human service agencies dedicated to promote the social, political and economic well-being of the Latino community. The Federation provides a wide-range of services geared towards strengthening Hispanic families and supporting Latino institutions serving over two million Hispanics living in the Northeast region. For more information, please visit www.hispanicfederation.org.

The Latino Commission on AIDS is a local, regional and national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to improving and expanding health promotion, research, treatment and other services to the Latino/Hispanic communities through organizing, education, model program development, capacity building & training. For more information on the Latino Commission on AIDS call (212) 675-3288, or visit their website: www.latinoaids.org.

Unidos Podemos/United We Can

Voices of Faith in Support of the 2010 Census is a joint effort of the Latino Religious Leadership Program of the Latino Commission on AIDS & the Hispanic Federation to promote Census 2010.