

2008 election guide for rural Latin@s

HANDS-ON DEMOCRACY

VOTE



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Main Street
Project

VOTE!

November 4, 2008

¡VE Y VOTA!

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This November, voters in the U.S. will elect a new president and many state and local representatives. There's a lot at stake for Latin@s who live in small towns and rural communities. Election outcomes will have a real impact on you and your neighbors.

Whether or not you're eligible to vote, there are many ways to get involved.

- Read about the issues important to many rural Latin@s and their communities, and spread the word to your friends, family, and neighbors.
- Volunteer to register others or to drive people to the polls on Election Day.
- Learn about community organizations that support Latin@ and other community residents.
- And if you're eligible to vote, make sure you're informed so you can make the best choice when you cast your ballot.

You can be part of democracy.
Together, we can make a difference!

ABOUT MAIN STREET PROJECT

We're a grassroots cultural organizing, media justice and economic development initiative working to help rural communities face today's realities with hope. We provide creative and practical tools – like this election guide – to give rural residents of all ages, cultures, economic and immigration status the opportunity to more fully participate in all aspects of community life.

Let us know if this was helpful. Visit us at www.MainStreetProject.org. Or call **612-879-7578**.

WHY VOTE?

If you're a citizen in the U.S., voting is one of your fundamental rights. It gives you a voice in how your government works – and your voice is just as important as every other person.

When you vote, you participate in a democratic process that determines who will represent you, your family, and your neighbors in your community, your state, and your country. Here are just a few examples of the decisions that politicians make – decisions that affect your day-to-day life:

- Set budgets for local law enforcement
- Set priorities for neighborhood schools
- Decide how to reform immigration laws
- Pass wage and labor laws
- Make trade agreements
- Decide what warning labels get placed on products like TVs, CDs and toys

ABOUT THE LATIN@ COMMUNITY

Latin@s are a growing part of the U.S. democracy. At 46 million people, Latin@s make up 15 percent of the total U.S. population and are the nation's largest, fastest growing and youngest population group. Nearly 3.2 million Latin@s live in rural areas of the country – that's 6.3 percent of the nation's non-metro residents.

In the 2008 general elections, Latin@s will account for nine percent of eligible voters nationwide. That's more than enough people to get the candidates' interest and attention. It's also important to know that since voting requires citizenship, about four of every ten Latin@s are *not* eligible to go to the polls.

What should candidates and our communities know about the Latin@ community? Main Street Project's Program Director, Amalia Anderson, offers this view: *"We are not a homogenous voting block. Latin@s are a mix of citizens and non-citizens, including immigrants, refugees, political asylees, permanent residents, native-born U.S. Latin@s, as well as those who have been naturalized. We are Indigenous, Mestizo, Chicano and Afro-Latin@. We are old and in increasing numbers, young. We speak Spanish, English, Portuguese and Indigenous languages. We are rich and we are poor. And we all deserve to have our voices heard!"*

It's worth saying again: Even if you're not eligible to vote, there are many ways you can get involved in the political process. We all are important members of U.S. society and we all have the right to participate. That's the way democracy is supposed to work.



SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

MYTH: Latin@s aren't interested in politics.

FACT: Latin@s are registering to vote at a rate six times greater than the general population. Latin@s vote at a rate five times greater than the general population.

HOW TO REGISTER AND VOTE

Minnesota

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE?

You can register and vote if you:

- Are a U.S. citizen
- Are at least 18-years-old on Election Day
- Have lived in Minnesota for 20 days immediately before Election Day
- Have a felony conviction record that was discharged, expired or completed
- Are not under court-ordered guardianship where a court has revoked your voting rights
- Have not been ruled legally incompetent by a court of law

HOW CAN I REGISTER TO VOTE?

You must either:

- Complete a voter registration application at least 21 days before Election Day (by Tuesday, Oct. 14)

OR

- Register on Election Day

WHERE CAN I GET A VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION?

- Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, in person or online at www.sos.state.mn.us
- County auditors' office
- City clerks' office
- Public libraries
- Locations where you apply for, renew or change your Minnesota driver's license or ID card

You can ask the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State for a voter registration application in another language or in large print.

HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY?

If you're not registered to vote or need to update your registration information, you may do that on Election Day at the polling place for the precinct you live in. However, you must have proof of residence. There are two ways you can do that:

1. Bring **ONE** of these with you:
 - A valid Minnesota driver's license, a learner's permit, a Minnesota ID card, or a receipt for any of these that shows a valid address in the precinct
 - A current student ID card, registration card, or fee statement showing your valid address in the precinct
 - A student ID card including your photo *IF your college gave election officials a student housing list*
 - A tribal ID card that shows your name, signature and address in the precinct
 - A valid registration in the same precinct under a different address

- A notice of late registration that was sent to you from your county auditor or city clerk
- A voter registered in the same precinct as you who can confirm your address with a signed oath
- An authorized employee of a residential facility where you live who can confirm your address *IF the residential facility gave election officials a list of employees*

2. Or bring **BOTH** of these with you:

- A photo ID from the list below

AND

- A current bill in your name showing your current address from the list below:

Photo IDs (may be expired)

- Minnesota driver's license
- Minnesota ID card
- U.S. passport
- U.S. military ID
- Tribal ID card
- Minnesota university, college or technical college ID card

Bills (delivered electronically or by mail)

- Utility bill due within 30 days of Election Day (phone, cell phone, VOIP, TV, cable, satellite, Internet service, electric, gas, solid waste, sewer service, water)
- Rent statement showing utilities dated within 30 days of Election Day
- Current student fee statement

WHERE DO I VOTE?

To find your polling place, go to the Minnesota Secretary of State Web site at <http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

Or call toll free: **1-877-600-VOTE (1-877-600-8683)**

Absentee Ballot: If you know ahead of time that you will be out of your voting precinct on Election Day, you can complete an absentee ballot request form from your Secretary of State and an absentee ballot will be mailed to you prior to Election Day. You can also vote by absentee ballot in person at your county auditor's office or city or township clerk's office, starting 30 days prior to Election Day.

Please see next page for information on how to register and vote in Iowa.



HOW TO REGISTER AND VOTE

Iowa

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE?

You can register and vote if you:

- Are a U.S. citizen
- Are a resident of Iowa
- Are at least 18-years-old on Election Day
- Have *not* been convicted of a felony, unless your voting rights have been restored
- Are not currently judged incompetent to vote by a court
- Give up your right to vote in any other place

HOW CAN I REGISTER TO VOTE?

You must either:

- Complete a voter registration form at least 10 days before general and primary elections, 11 days before all other elections. (Nov. 4 is the date of the general election – so pre-register by Oct. 24.)

OR

- Register on Election Day

WHERE CAN I GET A VOTER REGISTRATION FORM?

- Iowa Secretary of State's Office
- Public libraries
- County auditors' office
- Public assistance agencies
- State offices serving people with disabilities
- Some city clerk and school board secretaries

HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY?

If you're not registered to vote or need to update your registration information, you may do that on Election Day at the polling place for the precinct you live in. However, you must have proof of residence and identity. The best form of ID is a valid Iowa driver's license with current address. All forms of photo ID must be current, valid and contain an expiration date.

If your Iowa driver's license has an old address on it, you can use the license as proof of identity and use one of the following as proof of residence *if* it contains your current address:

- Residential lease
- Property tax statement

- Utility bill
- Bank statement
- Paycheck
- Government check
- Other government document

If you don't have an Iowa driver's license, bring one of the following as proof of identity *if* it contains your photo:

- Out-of-state driver's license
- Non-driver ID card
- U.S. passport
- U.S. military ID
- ID card issued by employer
- Student ID issued by Iowa high school or college

If you don't have proof of residence and identity, you AND a registered voter in your precinct may sign an oath saying that you are who you say you are and that you live in the precinct you say you live in.

Provisional Ballot: If you don't have proof of residence or identity and do not have anyone who can sign an oath about your residence and identity, you will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot.

WHERE DO I VOTE?

To find your polling place, go to the Iowa Secretary of State Web site at <http://www.sos.state.ia.us> and click on Find Your Precinct/Polling Place.

Or call toll free: **1-888-SOS-VOTE (1-888-767-8683)**

Absentee Ballot: If you know ahead of time that you will be out of your voting precinct on Election Day, you can complete an absentee ballot request form from your Secretary of State and an absentee ballot will be mailed to you prior to Election Day. You can also vote by absentee ballot in person at your county auditor's office or at satellite absentee voting locations, starting 40 days before Election Day.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

MYTH: Most Latin@s are poor.

FACT: Latin@ purchasing power is now 700 billion dollars per year and growing at an average rate of one billion dollars per week, four billion dollars per month, 50 billion dollars per year.

MYTH: Beyond providing a labor force, Latin@s contribute very little to society.

FACT: Latin@s are creating new businesses at a rate three times faster than the general population, generating over 200 billion dollars per year in revenue.





Know your voting rights

If you are properly registered, you have the right to vote — it's the law, and you have the proof in your hands! You'll notice letters and numbers after each of your rights listed below. Those codes tell lawyers and poll workers where to find the actual state statute or law that protects your right to vote! Take this with you when you vote.



Minnesota

MINNESOTA VOTER'S BILL OF RIGHTS (For all persons residing in this state who meet federal voting eligibility requirements)

You have the right to bring this bill of rights into the voting booth with you [MINN. STAT. § 204C.08].

1. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to be absent from work for the purpose of voting during the morning of Election Day without a deduction in wages. [Minn. Stat. §204C.04]
2. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to vote if you are in line at your polling place any time between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. [Minn. Stat. §204C.05]
3. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to register to vote and to vote on Election Day if you can provide the required proof of residence. [Minn. Stat. §201.061]

4. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to orally confirm your identity with an election judge and to direct another person to sign your name if you are unable to sign your name. [Minn. Stat. §201.056]
5. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to receive special assistance when voting because of an inability to read English or physical inability to mark a ballot. If you are in need of assistance, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to have any person of your choice accompany you into the voting booth, except an agent of your employer or union or a candidate. [Minn. Stat. §204C.15]
6. If you are unable to enter a polling place that uses paper ballots or an electronic voting system, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to register and vote without leaving your car. Two election judges will assist you with registering and will provide you with the necessary ballots. [Minn. Stat. §204C.15]
7. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to bring your minor children into the polling place and into the voting booth with you. [Minn. Stat. § 204C.08]
8. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to vote after a felony conviction if your civil rights have been restored. [Minn. Stat. §§ 201.155, 609.165]
9. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to vote without anyone in the polling place trying to influence your vote. [Minn. Stat. §211B.11]
10. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to receive a replacement ballot if you make a mistake or spoil your ballot before it is submitted. [Minn. Stat. §204C.13]
11. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to file a written complaint at your polling place if you are dissatisfied with the way an election is being run. [Minn. Stat. § 204C.08]
12. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT to take a sample ballot into the voting booth with you. [Minn. Stat. §204C.13]

If you feel your rights have been violated, call the Election Protection hotline toll free: **1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683)** in both Minnesota and Iowa.

Iowa

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

1. REQUEST A BALLOT AND VOTE if you are registered to vote, 18 years of age or older, a resident of Iowa, and a United States citizen. [Iowa Code § 48A.5(2)]
2. VOTE BY PROVISIONAL BALLOT if you cannot produce identification on Election Day or if your name does not appear on the precinct register or your eligibility to vote cannot be determined. [Iowa Administrative Code 721-21.3(49); Iowa Code § 49.77(4)]
3. VOTE BY ABSENTEE BALLOT. [Iowa Code § 53.1]
4. VOTE IF YOU HAVE MOVED WITHIN THE SAME COUNTY, even if you have not updated your registration. You must vote at the polling place for your current address. You may vote by regular ballot if precinct officials can confirm your registration, or by provisional ballot if they cannot. [Iowa Administrative Code 721-21.4(49)]
5. VOTE AT THE POLLING PLACE FOR YOUR PREVIOUS ADDRESS, if you have moved in the 10 days preceding Election Day. [Iowa Code § 48A.5A(4)]
6. REVIEW A SAMPLE BALLOT before voting. [Iowa Code § 49.71]
7. VOTE IN A HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE VOTING PLACE, or if a polling place is not accessible to you, vote from your car at curbside. [Iowa Code § 49.90]
8. MARK YOUR BALLOT PRIVATELY and free from coercion or intimidation. [Iowa Code § 39A.2 et seq.]
9. RECEIVE ASSISTANCE with voting in a polling place, if needed. [Iowa Code § 49.90]
10. VOTE IF YOU ARE IN LINE at the time the polls close. Polls close at 9:00 p.m. [Iowa Code §§ 49.73, 49.74]
11. REQUEST A NEW BALLOT if you made a mistake and have not already cast your ballot. You may receive up to three ballots before casting your ballot. [Iowa Code § 49.100]

LEARN ABOUT THE ISSUES

In a recent nationwide Pew Hispanic Center survey, Latin@s were asked which issues would be very important in their vote for president. Here are the top issues and the percentage of Latin@s who said each was very important:

- Education – 54%
- The economy and jobs – 51%
- Health care – 51%
- U.S. campaign against terrorism – 45%
- Immigration – 27%

Use the following information to help you make informed decisions when you vote, and to get involved in other ways to build a better future for your community.

EDUCATION

- Compared to urban schools, rural schools receive a smaller percentage of federal funding. That puts rural schools at a disadvantage for important resources such as computers and skilled teachers.
- Education is very important to Latin@ families. In some rural communities, high dropout rates for Latin@ students should be addressed.
- To meet the education needs of diverse communities, rural schools will need more ESL and foreign language teachers.
- The DREAM Act (The Development, Relief and Education for Aliens Act) would allow undocumented students who graduated from a U.S. high school to qualify for in-state tuition rates within their state higher education system. Neither Minnesota nor Iowa have passed this important legislation.

THE ECONOMY & JOBS

- The number of Latin@s in rural areas doubled from 1.4 to 2.7 million between 1980 and 2000, accounting for at least a quarter of the population growth in non-metro areas. The influx of Latin@s has helped to revitalize economies and populations of many rural communities.
- Because of opportunities for “low-skilled” workers, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in 2003 there were approximately 64,000 and 66,000 Latin@s working in meatpacking and other agricultural industries in Iowa and Minnesota, respectively. Since 2003, rural communities have been heavily shaken by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids affecting Latino workers and families – and the economies of the communities where they live.
- Latin@s are hard workers doing their best to support families – but they have been taken advantage of by some employers. Labor laws must be enforced and workers’ right observed so that working-class families are protected.

HEALTH CARE

- Many rural communities already have limited access to hospitals and other health care resources – but rural Latin@s have even more challenges with language and cultural barriers, occupational health concerns (related to work in food processing plants), inadequate funds for transportation and insurance out-of-pocket costs, and lack of any insurance at all.
- Reports from Iowa indicate that 50 percent or more of the Latin@s

may not have medical insurance – a statistic that makes Latin@s the highest uninsured community among racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Latin@s also have the highest uninsured rate among women of any racial or ethnic group (37 percent).

- More and more U.S. residents, regardless of citizenship or ethnicity, say that they want guaranteed health care for everyone.

U.S. CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM & IMMIGRATION

- Since the attacks on September 11, much of the legislation intended to target “terrorists” (such as the Patriot Act) has created negative consequences for undocumented Latin@ immigrants living in the U.S. Heightened restrictions on immigration have made it harder for Latin@s to get work visas and gain residency. And the Department of Homeland Security has increased efforts to deport undocumented immigrants.
- Latin@ immigrants came to Iowa and Minnesota looking for peaceful neighborhoods, quality education for their children and promising employment opportunities. As a result of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity and raids, people in these communities have experienced fear and witnessed first hand the tragedy of family separation.
- There is a clear need for immigration reform that gives undocumented immigrants a path to residency or citizenship, that treats all people with respect and dignity, and that keeps families together and in the communities they now call home.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

MINNESOTA

Centro Campesino
(507) 446-9599

Centro Cultural
(218) 236-7318

Community Connectors
(507) 372-4664

Heartland Community Action Agency
(320) 235-0850
www.heartlandcaa.org

Migrant Health Services
(218) 236-6502
www.migranthealthservice.org

Mujeres Unidas del Red River Valley
(218) 236-9884

Northfield Community Action Center
(507) 664-3550
www.northfieldcac.org

People Escaping Poverty Project
(218) 236-5434
www.pepp.org

Welcome Center of Austin
(507) 434-2836
www.austinwelcomecenter.org

Welcome Center of Faribault
(507) 333-5036
www.faribodiversity.blogspot.com

West Central Integration Collaborative
(320) 231-8571
www.wciconline.com

IOWA

American Friends Service Committee
(515) 274-4851
www.afsc.org

Amigos del Inmigrante / Friends of the Immigrant
(319) 621-1838
www.friendsoftheimmigrant.org

AMOS
(515) 554-3433

Catholic Charities
(515) 244-3761
www.dmdiocese.org

Eastern Iowa Coalition
(319) 361-0757

El Centro Latinoamericano
(319) 287-6400

Hispanic Educational Resources
(515) 282-6542

HOLA Center
(515) 299-HOLA
www.holacenter.org

Immigrant Rights Network of Iowa and Nebraska
(515) 237-5020
www.irmin.org

Iowa Immigration Education Coalition
(515) 243-2000
www.iowaimmigrationeducation.org

Iowa Legal Aid
(515) 243-2151
www.iowalegalaid.org

Iowa Valley Continuing Education
(641) 752-7160
www.iavalley.cc.ia.us/ivce/

Latinos Unidos of Iowa, Inc.
(515) 279-6840
www.latinosunidosofiowa.com

