



June 27, 2011

Council President Anna C. Verna
Philadelphia City Council
City Hall, Room 494
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear President Verna:

As you might be aware from recent and considerable press coverage, LatinoLines is a coalition of Latino leaders, formed to demand justice and a fair redistricting process that remedies decades of what we believe has been a long history of voting rights violations. For too long, the Latino community in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has been gerrymandered, diluting its voting strength and in many instances, eroding its viability as a community of interest. The existing redistricting legislation, at both the local and state levels, has seriously impeded the rights of the Latino community to freely elect members of their choice. At the local level, the goal of LatinoLines is simply to advocate for newly drawn lines that correct four decades of voting rights injustices suffered by the Latino community as reflected in the history of the Seventh Councilmanic District.

As the current legislative process on redistricting develops, the LatinoLines Coalition is demanding that Latinos finally have the representation in this century, that they did not have in the last. The latest 2010 census numbers show an impressive growth in the Latino community, particularly in Philadelphia's Seventh Councilmanic District. For years, voting districts in Latino neighborhoods have been "fractured" or "packed" to solely benefit incumbents and political parties. And by allowing such 'fractured' and diluted districts as exist today, fair representation for Latinos is merely a hope, not a reality. Now, LatinoLines is demanding that the new lines be drawn to benefit and reflect the viable and growing Latino communities in our city with the ultimate goal of bolstering this community's political voice, allowing it to take its natural course among the leadership of the City of Philadelphia.

To remedy this longstanding civil rights violation, LatinoLines is collaborating with Latino Justice - PRLDEF, a national legal defense fund and educational advocacy group. Working with their experts, LatinoLines has designed redistricting maps that in our view, are consistent with the spirit and intent of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We are hopeful that the City Council will also commit to designing districts that meet the basic tenets of this civil rights law.

We would like to make these maps and experts available to you. However, in doing so, we need to better understand this year's City Council plans to ensure the redistricting process is fair, transparent and open to the participation of all residents of our city. We understand the city charter requires the council to draw its lines within six-months from the official release of the reapportionment census figures. Therefore, we'd like the following information as soon as possible:

- 1) What is the process for the 2011 enactment of redistricting legislation? We understand that you have established a redistricting committee. As Chair, are you the primary contact to follow-up with regarding our proposals?
- 2) When do you anticipate the formation of a bill for introduction and committee assignment?
- 3) What is the planned schedule of activities (timetable) to ensure the public participates fully in the redistricting process? We are prepared to recommend ways of ensuring the hearings are accessible to communities that traditionally have little access to the legislative process.

Finally, we seek your pledge to work with LatinoLines and the Latino community to ensure the creation of fair and equitable new city council district(s) and a process that is characterized by transparency and integrity. We ask that you respond by Friday, July 15, 2011 since we will be hosting a public event to keep the community and media apprised of all related developments.

Meanwhile, we extend our warmest wishes and appreciation for your kind attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

The LatinoLines Coalition Steering Committee

LatinoLines.com

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Mayor Michael Nutter
LatinoLines Coalition members
Latino Justice - PRLDEF
Committee of Seventy
NAACP (Philadelphia Chapter)
National Council of La Raza

The logo for LatinoLines features the word "Latino" in a bold, brown, sans-serif font, followed by "Lines" in a thinner, brown, sans-serif font. A horizontal line runs through the middle of the letters "l", "i", "n", and "e" in "Lines".

WHEN YOU PURPOSEFULLY DILUTE OUR VOICE, YOU TAKE AWAY OUR RIGHT TO HAVE A CHOICE