



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Wynne Alexander  
917-880-6042

## **Civic Leaders Go On The Offensive for Philadelphia Latino Voting Rights**

In an unprecedented move, LatinoLines, a coalition of Latino leaders, was formed in Philadelphia to bring public attention to the civil rights of Latinos and 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 has been gerrymandered, diluting its voting strength and in many instances, eroding its viability as a community of interest. Ultimately the existing redistricting legislation, at both the local and state level, has seriously impeded the rights of the Latino community to freely elect a member of their choice.

As the current legislative process on redistricting develops, brought about by the release of the 2010 census numbers, the LatinoLines Coalition is demanding that Latinos finally have the representation in this century that they did not have in the last. We all know Philadelphia helped form this nation with the battle cry ‘No taxation without representation.’ The city of the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall can no longer be the city that does not allow sectors of its citizens fair and equitable representation at the ballot box and seats of governmental power.

The old voting district lines have been played with, gerrymandered, fixed and toyed with – all to benefit private interests and politicians. Today we are announcing that LatinoLines will seek and propose to the appropriate legislative bodies, plans for the creation of at least two (2) Latino majority State House Districts and one (1) Latino-majority City Council District within Philadelphia County.

The latest 2010 census numbers show an impressive growth in the Latino community, particularly in the 7<sup>th</sup> councilmanic district, the 180<sup>th</sup> and 179<sup>th</sup> state house districts. For years, voting districts in Latino neighborhoods have been “fractured” or “packed” to benefit politicians and political parties. 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 to take its natural course among the leadership of the City of Philadelphia.

To remedy this longstanding civil rights violation, LatinoLines has joined forces with Latino Justice, a national legal defense fund and educational advocacy group. LatinoLines co-founder Angel Ortiz said, “We hope to avoid the conflict and discussions that took place ten years ago which ended up with us having the most gerrymandered district in recent memory. We hope that Philadelphia’s city council and mayor have the understanding that the same Hispanic community that made Philadelphia grow and prosper - will no longer be kept on the back burner in terms of political representation.”

John Garcia, Director of Communications for Latino Justice in New York City, New York noted, “The Latino community in Philadelphia has grown enough that it is due for fair and equitable representation in elected offices. The 2010 census demonstrates that the population numbers clearly and unequivocally exist to justify the creation of Latino majority districts.”

Latino Lines is an expanding coalition of Latino leaders from across the city and commonwealth, including Lancaster, Reading and Allentown, Pennsylvania.