



# A LATINO VISION FOR NEW JERSEY'S FUTURE

*Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey (LLANJ)*

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## *INTRODUCTION*

### *LATINO LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE (LLANJ)*

In 1999 four hundred Latino leaders from diverse organizations across the State of New Jersey convened a conference at Rutgers University that concluded in the creation of the Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey (LLANJ). The mission of LLANJ is:

- **To mobilize and empower Latino communities to obtain political, economic, and social equity.**
- **To unify organizations and individuals in advocating for the rights of Latinos throughout the state of New Jersey.**

To carry out the mission a Board of Delegates was elected and various working committees were formed. "The Vision" presented here is a product of the work of the committees and the deliberations of the Board of Delegates.

"The Vision" describes New Jersey as it ought to be. LLANJ presents it as a challenge to public and private leaders to build a State that can lead the nation in carrying out an inclusive strategy that empowers all residents to attain a superior quality of life.

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## ***THE VISION***

### ***OPPORTUNITIES OPEN TO ALL***

New Jersey continues to attract motivated workers and to enrich its social fabric because it creates opportunities for all who come to contribute. The State confronts its affordable housing shortage by imaginative initiatives to create new housing. Community schools and intelligent planning has given many towns a new spirit. Small businesses are thriving because the State cultivates entrepreneurial initiatives. Jobs in key sectors, like school construction, recruit from the urban communities, thereby closing a huge opportunity gap. Unions bring in Latino and other aspiring members to replenish their skilled workforce.

The State taxes its residents fairly and only as necessary to realize its vision. State government finds leadership from all groups and it develops and implements mechanisms that guarantee the composition of its employees is in accord with rapidly changing demographics. Latinos are an important part of this new look that takes advantage of the skills and dedication they bring to their communities. There is expanded support for community organizations that have the competence and skills to communicate effectively with diverse groups and deliver needed services to assure no one is left out of a widespread prosperity.

Finally, there is openness in the political process that incorporates all groups. Latinos achieve the degree of representation in both elected and appointed roles in the legislature, judiciary and executive commensurate with their numbers and contribution to the State's progress. The most diverse State in the country is also the most successful.

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## **WE EDUCATE EVERY CHILD**

New Jersey achieves its promise of a “thorough and efficient education” for all children. Every child who needs early childhood education receives it in a neighborhood setting that respects home culture and language. The State provides leadership, adequately funds and holds schools accountable to graduate all children by enabling them to meet high standards. Children receive attention to their particular needs and all schools use best practices to educate English learners. School management teams representative of the parents of the student population and communities have a direct role in shaping the directions of their schools.

The achievement gap between poorer district schools and wealthier districts is closed. Facilities are comparable and the educational opportunities are similar. A renewed teacher corps drawing from the diverse population of the State leads the way to student success opening higher education opportunities for every capable student. The State broadens its financial assistance to permits qualified students, regardless of their economic or immigration status, to pursue a degree. As a result New Jersey’s workforce becomes the best prepared in the country and its social fabric the strongest.

## ***IMMIGRANTS ARE A CORNERSTONE***

New Jersey leaders recognize the immense contribution immigrants make to sustain the economy from hi-tech to basic service sectors. The State’s educational campaign helps residents to value immigrants as an integral part of the workforce, needed to keep the economy vital and our society vibrant. A strong workforce development plan provides immigrants tangible support to improve their skills at all levels and to advance in their careers.

The State uses all its resources to open legal options for undocumented workers and assures basic services to all immigrants. It exercises its influence and orients programs to protect the integrity of the Latino and other immigrant families.

## ***HEALTH DISPARITIES ARE ELIMINATED***

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A strong campaign to meet Healthy New Jersey 2010 targets and eliminates most health disparities between Latinos and the general population. HIV/AIDS, diabetes, asthma no longer afflict Latinos disproportionately. The number of Latinos without any health coverage decreases dramatically from nearly 40% to the general population average of 15%. Everyone in New Jersey, including undocumented workers, are provided primary healthcare through a combination of community health centers and extended Medicaid programs. Access to healthcare is universal.

A strong multicultural program within the Department of Health assures every health provider achieves cultural and language competency for patients needing treatment. Substance abuse and mental health counseling is available in the primary languages of clients seeking help. In part, a strong recruitment of medical professionals from New Jersey's own diverse population has created this vastly improved health system for all economic and social groups.

### ***DISCRIMINATION IS ROOTED OUT***

Diversity is celebrated throughout the State. People shall not fear that their race, gender, creed, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation or disability is an impediment to fair treatment, equal opportunity and the pursuit of a better life in our state. State, county and municipal institutions take the lead in demonstrating that their workforces, at all levels, are reflective of the diversity of the State's population. All state services are delivered efficiently, without regard to immigration or economic status, so that no resident shall be subjected to unfair treatment in sensitive areas such as child welfare, labor practices, education, housing or public safety.

New Jersey takes the lead in showing that law enforcement does not need racial profiling to fight crime. Diversity in law enforcement workforces, at all levels, strengthens police/community relations resulting in a common effort to enhance the quality of life and improve security for everyone.

The private sector takes advantage of the great talent in all sectors of the population implementing effective non-discriminatory employment and business practices that result in a stronger economy.

Our combined talents make us stronger. Our diversity is celebrated!

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## ***A PARTNERSHIP OF PEOPLES***

This Vision is a challenge to New Jersey's leaders in both the private and public sectors. Those that aspire to leadership in our State must unite all peoples if this Vision is to become reality.

LLANJ wants to work with all those possessing the will and plans to accomplish the immense task at hand. We look forward to dialogue and analysis with others to perfect this Vision, and to put into motion the forces that will bring it about.

# *LLANJ*



## *Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey*

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