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**Testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee
Regarding the Boundaries of Illinois' Legislative Districts
Submitted by Sylvia Puente, Executive Director, Latino Policy Forum
Saturday, May 21, 2011**

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this committee. My name is Sylvia Puente and I'm the executive director of the Latino Policy Forum. The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago-area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

A major component of the Forum's community engagement is its role as co-convenor of the *Illinois Latino Agenda*, a 49-member coalition of Latino nonprofit organizations. One of the *Illinois Latino Agenda's* primary concerns is representation at various levels in state government. As such, we've focused significant time and energy working together in order to recommend new legislative district boundaries that protect the voting rights of Latino residents and strengthen their political representation.

Over the course of the last month, members of the *Illinois Latino Agenda* have testified at 9 House and Senate Redistricting Committee hearings combined. Thus far, our collective remarks have focused on the dramatic growth of the Latino population, the need for transparency throughout the redistricting process and the creation of new Latino majority, influence or coalition districts throughout the state of Illinois.

I would like to start my remarks by thanking this committee and Chairman Raoul in particular, for ensuring that the general public had an opportunity to view and comment on the proposed map before it was voted upon.

After reviewing the Senate and House maps released by the legislature during the last 72 hours, the Latino Policy Forum and the *Illinois Latino Agenda* are disappointed with the map being proposed by the legislature. Given the dramatic 33% growth of the Latino population over the last decade, our analysis indicates that Latino residents have been short-changed by the current proposal.

As you can see by the chart that's attached to my written testimony, the *Illinois Latino Agenda* has submitted maps that would create 13 House and Senate districts combined that have a total Latino population greater than 65 percent – compared to just 6 by the General Assembly. Instead of creating districts that gave Latino residents a greater opportunity to select a candidate of their choice, the legislature has proposed 12 districts with a total Latino population between 50 and 64 percent - compared to the 4 districts submitted by the *Illinois Latino Agenda*. Furthermore, we have proposed 15 influence districts with a total Latino population between 20-49% compared to the 11 put forth by the legislature.

Through our coordination and collaboration with the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations, we have shown that an increase in Latino majority, influence or coalition districts does not have to come at the expense of African-American majority districts.

In fact, the UCCRO proposal, which encompasses the recommendations put forth by the *Illinois Latino Agenda*, maintains the same number of African-American majority districts that we have today. In other words, upholding the voting rights of Latino and African-American residents in the state of Illinois are not mutually exclusive goals.

In terms of geography, the most egregious aspect of the legislature's redistricting proposal, from our perspective, is on the south-side of Chicago. We have shown that it is possible to create 6 Latino majority districts on the south side, 5 of which are at or above the 65 percent threshold. However, it appears that the legislature has created 3 districts that have a total Latino population at or above 80 percent.

In addition, we are concerned about the sustainability of Latino majority districts on the north-side of Chicago, where 3 of the 4 total Latino population thresholds appear to hover in the middle 50s.

In the suburbs, we are heartened that simple majority districts have been created in the Franklin Park area, in Waukegan, and in a district connecting Elgin and Carpentersville. However, we take issue with the districts created in Aurora which appear to split the Latino concentrations into two districts, 1 being a simple majority and 1 being an influence district. This is the only area in the suburbs where a Latino majority district could have been established at a total population threshold greater than 65%. Furthermore, our preliminary analysis indicates that additional influence districts could have been created in areas like the southern suburbs of Chicago.

As I stated at the beginning of my remarks, we believe that Latino residents are being short-changed in this redistricting process. We believe that the legislature can do better.



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Summary of proposed Latino House & Senate, Chicago & Suburban districts
by % Latino Tot Pop

IL House Comparison of ILA Proposal (unofficial)

	Illinois Latino Agenda	House Dems (unofficial)	Difference from ILA
65%+	9	4	-5
50-64%	4	9	5
20-49%	8	6	-2
TOTAL	21	19	-2

IL Senate Comparison of ILA Proposal

	Illinois Latino Agenda	Senate Dems	Difference from ILA
65%+	4	2	-2
50-64%	0	3	3
20-49%	7	5	-2
TOTAL	11	10	-1

TOTAL Legislature Comparison of ILA Proposal

	Illinois Latino Agenda	Dems	Difference from ILA
65%+	13	6	-7
50-64%	4	12	8
20-49%	15	11	-4
TOTAL	32	29	-3

Prepared by Latino Policy Forum from analysis of UCCRO, May 2011

