



Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

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Immigrant Groups Laud Legislative Map Proposal as Important Step Forward

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) commends the Illinois Senate and Illinois House Redistricting Committees for their work on the proposed new legislative maps. ICIRR supports the proposed maps as an important step forward for the voting rights representation of the Latino, Asian, and Arab / Muslim communities of Illinois. We will ask for amendments to the proposed map to make adjustments in several areas.

The past year has been one of significant progress for the representation of Latino, Asian, and Arab Muslim communities in Illinois. The census showed increases of over 30% in the Latino and Asian populations in Illinois, while other communities were stable or even declined. In the past decade 327,000 immigrants have become naturalized U.S. citizens in Illinois, eligible to vote. ICIRR and our members have registered over 106,000 immigrant voters and filled out the citizenship applications of over 53,000 immigrants.

This past spring saw historic advances by the Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern communities in the municipal elections, and this February Governor Quinn signed the Illinois Voting Rights Act at a celebration cosponsored by ICIRR and the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community. On April 30 House Speaker Madigan and Senate President Cullerton attended an ICIRR rally of over 1,200 people where they were asked to deliver a map that ensured appropriate representation of our communities.

The proposed map largely delivers on ICIRR's request that Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern communities be fairly represented in Illinois. Specifically the proposed map:

- Protects Latino and Latino influence districts on the North Side, and adds one Latino Senate and House district in the Southwest Side / Cicero area,
- Creates strong Latino and Latino influence districts in Waukegan and the Franklin Park, Aurora, and Elgin areas,

- Unites important communities of interest like Chinatown and Little Village in single districts.

The map creates a Latino majority district that will probably be represented initially by the powerful House Speaker Madigan – and ICIRR believes that having such powerful political representation will greatly benefit Latino and immigrant interests in Illinois.

There are several areas where ICIRR asks for amendments to the proposal. These include:

- Adjusting North side / Northern suburban district boundaries and Southwest suburban district boundaries to better ensure Asian and Middle Eastern communities of interest are united, and
- Increasing the Latino population percentages in the proposed 22 and 23 districts.

We will let the lawyers decide if the current proposed boundaries meet the legal requirements of the Voting Rights Act – we do not offer an opinion on this legal matter. However as a practical matter the proposed map is a significant step forward for the representation of the Latino, Asian, and Muslim communities of Illinois and this progress should be celebrated. ICIRR complements the United Community Congress, Asian American Institute, and Latino Agenda on their excellent work to design maps showing how fair boundaries are possible.

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights continues to work for the passage of the Illinois DREAM Act to advance the education of undocumented immigrant youth this legislative session; for appropriate addressing of immigrant needs in the Illinois budget; and for measures that limit the destruction of families through cruel deportations by the out of control “Secure Communities” program.

ICIRR is the largest immigrant advocacy group in Illinois. ICIRR is 25 years old and has 138 member organizations.

This statement is also supported by the following ICIRR member organizations:

Instituto del Progreso Latino

The Resurrection Project

Federacion de Michoacanos en Illinois (FEDECFMI)

Mujeres Latinas en Accion

Latino Organization of the Southwest

SouthWest Organizing Project

Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community

Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago

Family Focus, Aurora