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Hispanic Leaders Praise President Bush for Restoring Food Stamp Benefits for Legal Immigrants

Washington, DC - The Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition (TLC) and the Hispanic Business Roundtable (HBR) today praised President Bush's decision to restore food stamp benefits for legal immigrants. By including this provision in his 2003 budget, the President is lending a much needed helping hands to many households with children in the Hispanic community.

"Once again President Bush has taken a courageous step to help the most vulnerable in our community," said TLC President Robert Deposada. "Eliminating these benefits for legal immigrants in the 1996 law clearly went too far. We are very pleased with the President's action and strongly believe he should be congratulated for putting the interest of law-abiding individuals in our community above partisan politics."

TLC's Board believes that by increasing food stamp benefits to low-income households with children and encouraging participation among citizen children of non-citizen parents, we will improve the lives of many children in our community. A majority of new participants under this proposal would live in households with children.

"The current recession has disproportionately affected the U.S. Hispanic community and particularly those working in the service industry, an industry dominated by recent immigrants," said HBR President Mario Rodriguez. "President Bush's proposal will provide much needed temporary assistance to most of these individuals until we can get our economy moving again."

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 significantly restricted non-citizens eligibility for means-tested Federal benefits. Most immigrants entering the country after August 22, 1996 are ineligible for SSI and Food Stamps until they either become citizens or earn 10 years of Social Security coverage. The five-year waiting period under this proposal is consistent with the rules of other federal assistance programs and encourages recent arrivals to support themselves through earnings.

The Latino Coalition and the Hispanic Business Roundtable are non-profit, nonpartisan national organizations based in Washington, DC. For more information on these organizations please visit our websites at www.hbrt.org and www.TheLatinoCoalition.com.

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