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## **LATINO LEADERS STRONGLY SUPPORT THE SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH FAIRNESS ACT**

**Washington, DC** - The Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition (TLC) and the Hispanic Business Roundtable (HBR) today called on congressional leaders to support the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2001, and pass it before Congress adjourns. This legislation has strong bipartisan in Congress.

"For almost two years we have called on the congressional leaders to put principles over politics and address the uninsured crisis in this country," said HBR President Mario Rodriguez, CEO of Jonathan Grey & Associates in San Clemente, California. "Today, we call on the congressional leader in both chambers to follow the lead of this bipartisan group of legislators working together to improve access to health insurance for workers in small businesses across the country. We applaud their efforts to push aside partisan politics in order to help address the needs and concerns of small business owners and their employees who cannot afford the high price of health insurance."

Recent studies indicate that many Hispanics do not have access to even basic health insurance coverage. In fact, a lack of access to affordable health insurance disproportionately affects America's large and growing Hispanic community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over one third, or 34.2 percent of Hispanics were uninsured, compared to only 12 percent of non-Hispanic whites. Only 38 percent of Hispanics working in small-to-medium size companies have health insurance compared to 63 percent for white workers.

"This bipartisan legislation allows health plans operated by associations to operate like those sponsored by large corporations and labor unions," said TLC President Robert Deposada. "Employees in small and medium-sized businesses will be able to obtain the same lower prices, purchasing clout, and administrative efficiencies from which workers in large corporations already benefit."

Most Hispanic workers are heavily concentrated in the service industry and in small businesses - working for firms that do not or cannot offer them health insurance coverage - therefore, they are disproportionately found outside the normal channels of health insurance in this country. "One of the main reasons why these small business-owners do not offer health insurance is simply the high cost and the fact that most health insurance companies do not target the small business and the self-employed markets," Deposada added. "This legislation would address this problem and will help millions of employers to offer insurance to their workers."

"It is estimated that up to 8.5 million small business workers would gain coverage if this bill is enacted," Deposada said. "We urge congressional leaders to find the courage and join President Bush and the sponsors of this bill, in order to help the millions of uninsured workers across the country."

The Latino Coalition and the Hispanic Business Roundtable are a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. They were established to address policy issues that directly affect the well-being of Hispanics in the U.S. For more information on these organizations, please visit their websites at [www.TheLatinoCoalition.com](http://www.TheLatinoCoalition.com) and [www.hbrt.org](http://www.hbrt.org).

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