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**Contact: Martha Lozada
202-546-0008**

LATINO LEADERS PRAISED PRESIDENT BUSH FOR HIS COURAGEOUS PROPOSAL TO REFORM IMMIGRATION

Washington, D.C. – The Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition today praised President Bush for his courageous proposal to reform our immigration laws. The Board also praised him for presenting comprehensive and effective guidelines to address the current problems with the system and find solutions to help improve America's security and economic prosperity.

“This proposal is a comprehensive and effective approach to address our immigration crisis,” said TLC President Robert Deposada. “The President should be praised for ignoring the empty rhetoric of the political extremes and presenting a common sense and pragmatic approach to solve this problem. His proposal addresses both the short-term and long-term problems, by establishing a temporary worker program that eliminates the incentives for individuals to cross the border illegally looking for a job. This way our resources on the border can focus on the most important priority which is defend our nation against terrorists and drug smugglers.”

The President's proposal offers workers already in this country without proper documentation the ability to legalize their status. At the end of the three year period under this program, workers will have three options: 1) return to their country of origin, 2) extend their temporary work status, or 3) seek permanent residency. “However, these individuals would have to go to the end of the line when seeking permanent residency. We cannot penalize those who have stood there for years abiding by the legal process.”

“It is simply fair for everyone involved,” Deposada said. “The proposal provides the peace of mind to millions of undocumented workers who can become part of the mainstream of American society. At the same time it eliminates the incentives for individuals to cross the border illegally looking for a job, simply because there will be a legal path for them to work in this country. It will also help expand our economy by providing the necessary stable labor force it needs to continue to grow. And most importantly it will help our national security needs by identifying 8-10 million individuals in this country that live in an underground economy and by targeting our law enforcement resources in our borders on terrorism and drug smuggling rather than pursuing a low-income worker looking for a job.”

The Board of Directors called on the congressional leaders to immediately act on the President's proposal and to push aside partisan extremists on both sides of the aisle in order to seek a compromise that will address the needs of the country. “Most Hispanics are tired of the empty rhetoric of political leaders who want to use immigration as a wedge issue to mobilize their base,” Deposada added. “We call on the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to push aside partisan interest and work with the White House to pass comprehensive reform. It is time for responsible leaders, like President Bush, to stand up and find a common sense solution to this crisis for the benefit of our communities.”

The Latino Coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. TLC was established to address policy issues that directly affect the well-being of Hispanics in the United States. TLC's agenda is to develop and promote policies that will foster economic equivalency and enhance overall business, economic, and social development of Hispanics. For more information, please visit our website at www.TheLatinoCoalition.com.

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**725 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E. • Washington, DC 20002
202-546-0008 Tel. • 202-546-0807 Fax • www.TheLatinoCoalition.com**