

PINAL HISPANIC COUNCIL



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

July 16, 2008

The Honorable Norman Dicks
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiaht
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Wayne Allard
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

We write to share our enthusiasm for the final passage of The Commission to Study the Potential Creation of the National Museum of the American Latino Act, S. 500. The bill was included in the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (S. 2739), which passed the Senate on April 10, 2008 and the House of Representatives on April 29, 2008 and was most recently signed into law by the President on May 8, 2008.

We write to respectfully request that the Commission to study the potential creation of the National Museum of the American Latino be fully funded at \$2.1 million in Fiscal Year 2009 to carry out its function. The Commission would help us determine how we can properly recognize the contributions of Hispanic Americans to our nation's history by studying the potential creation of a national museum dedicated to the art, culture, and the story of Hispanic Americans.

Though American Latinos' contributions span centuries and economic sectors, many people are unaware of the role Americans of Latino descent played, and continue to play, in the building of this great nation. Now that more than 48 million Americans are of

CENTRO DE AYUDA
712 N. Main Street
Eloy, AZ 85231
(520) 466-7292

CENTRO DE ESPERANZA
519 N. Main Street
Eloy, AZ 85231
(520) 466-3643

CENTRO DE UNIDAD
556 S. Arizona Blvd.
Coolidge, AZ 85228
(520) 723-7405

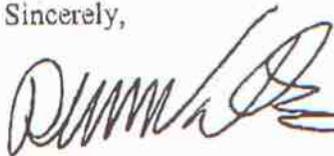
Hispanic descent in this country, there is a stronger interest in ensuring that America's national museums portray an inclusive picture of our current and future nation.

The Commission would study the impact of the potential museum and the cost of construction and maintenance. It would also develop an action plan, a fundraising plan, and a recommendation on whether to proceed with construction of the museum. Commission members, selected by the President and Congress, will be comprised of leaders with a commitment to the American Latino community and with experience planning for and administrating similar museums.

Museums in our nation's capital should reflect the history, culture, and achievements of the people of the United States, yet there is no substantive permanent Latino presence in any of the exhibits. Even with the many challenges and opportunities facing the Latino community, the importance of proper representation of Latinos and their contributions in our nation's foremost cultural institutions cannot be underestimated. Just as troubling is that millions of schoolchildren and families as well as tourists from all over the world can visit Washington, D.C. without ever encountering a single museum, monument, or collection that helps to educate them about this nation's largest minority.

When Americans travel to Washington, D.C., they expect the museums, monuments, and national parks to reflect the complete American experience. Providing the resources necessary for the Commission to do its work would be a major step toward ensuring that every American has the opportunity to learn the full history of our nation.

Sincerely,



Ralph Varela, LCSW
Council Member
Casa Grande, Arizona

Chief Executive Officer
Pinal Hispanic Council
Eloy, Arizona

Chairperson
Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Committee
of Pinal County

CC: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Honorable John Boehner, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader