



March 19, 2007

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Hon. Ken Salazar
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sen. Salazar,

On behalf of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the largest and most influential advocate for the nation's 2 million Hispanic-owned businesses, we write to lend our wholehearted support for Congress to approve S. 500 / H.R. 512, legislation that would allow for a commission to study the establishment of a national museum dedicated to the contributions and history of the American Hispanic community.

As you well know, the House of Representatives passed this legislation by voice vote in the 109th Congress, and it enjoyed broad bipartisan support. The sponsors are Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA) and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL). We appreciate the leadership you and Sen. Mel Martinez (R-FL) have shown in advancing this legislation in the Senate.

We would like to point out to any Member of Congress with concerns over the bill that this bill adopts a judicious approach to the consideration of a national museum. It only authorizes a study commission; no authority is provided for the establishment or construction of such a museum. Congress would have to act once again to do so after receiving the commission's recommendations on potential locations, fundraising sources, available collections, and community involvement. Many potential contributors from the private sector are committed to ensuring that a museum dedicated to American Hispanic history and cultural contributions is successful. The proponents of the project expect that half of the funding for the establishment of such a museum would come from the private sector.

There are 45 million Americans of Hispanic descent in the United States. One of every 5th child born in the United States is Hispanic. Yet hardly any of the exhibits in the national museums in Washington portray Hispanic contributions to the United States. Visitors to these museums walk away from them expecting to have a better sense of American history and culture. Although this sense is improving due to the National Museum of the American Indians and an upcoming National Museum of African American History and Culture, we cannot afford to continue letting an incomplete story be told.

Sincerely,

David C. Lizarraga
Chairman, Board of Directors

Michael L. Barrera
President and CEO