

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives

April 28, 2005

CELEBRATE CINCO DE MAYO

by

Cosponsoring the National Museum of the American
Latino Community Commission Act

Help Paint a More Complete Picture of America's History
That Tells Why the 5th of May is not Just an Excuse to Party

Dear Colleague:

Next Thursday, many Americans will raise their glasses and toast *Cinco de Mayo*, a day of festive celebration for sure, but certainly not the Mexican holiday many people think it is.

Did you know that *Cinco de Mayo* actually commemorates a decisive battle against Napoleon III's French Imperial Army in 1862 and not Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821? If the French – backed by the governments of England and Spain – had won the day, Mexico and the American Southern states could have become a French, English, or Spanish colony.

May 5 is hardly notable in modern Mexico, although Americans young and old often use the day to recognize Mexican American contributions to our diverse national heritage, just as we commemorate our Irish and Italian roots on St. Patrick's Day and Columbus Day respectively.

Today, there are nearly 40 million Americans of Latin American descent living in all regions of the United States. The heritage of the American Latino community is reflected in many diverse American cultural and linguistic traditions from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the rest of Latin America. But even though the United States geographically sits atop an entire continent of Latin Americans, we know and understand little about the enormous and far-reaching contributions Latinos have made, and are continuing to make, to the cultural life of our nation.

The museums in our nation's capital are the best forum to tell the whole story of our shared American history. Visitors from all around the world see the mosaic of American life portrayed in exhibits celebrating our great achievements in both politics and in the arts and sciences. We will introduce legislation on *Cinco de Mayo* that would help complete that mosaic by establishing a commission to study how and whether a new museum could be created in the nation's capital to exhibit the art, history, and culture of America's Latino community.

So, enjoy *Cinco de Mayo* and remember to toast the victory over the French at the Battle of Puebla.

If you wish to join us as an original cosponsor, or if your staff has any questions about this bill, please contact Joel Najar of Rep. Becerra's office at x63748 or joel.najar@mail.house.gov or Ralph Piña of Rep. Ros-Lehtinen's office at x53931 or ralph.pina@mail.house.gov. **Our deadline is noon on May 5th.**

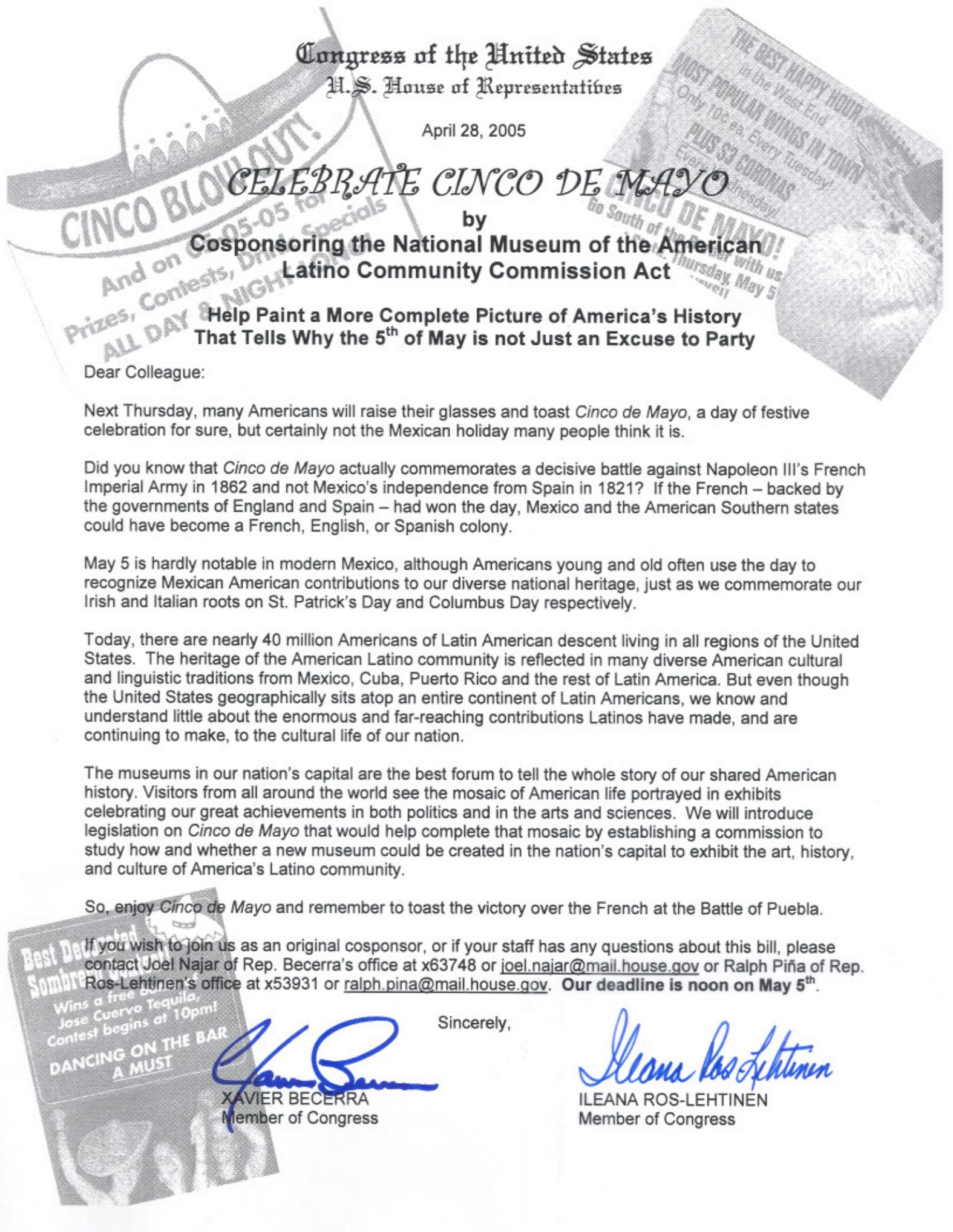
Sincerely,



XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Member of Congress



**Summary of Legislation to Create a
Commission to study and report on establishment of a
National Museum of the American Latino Community**

Cosponsors in the 108th Congress: Baca, Berkley, Berman, Brown, Cardoza, Clyburn, Crowley, L. Diaz-Balart, M. Diaz-Balart, Doggett, Filner, Gonzalez, Green, Grijalva, Gutierrez, Harris, Hinojosa, Honda, Larson, Lee, Lewis, Lofgren, Meeks, Menendez, Millender-McDonald, Napolitano, Ortiz, Pastor, Reyes, Ros-Lehtinen, Roybal-Allard, Sanchez, Sanchez, Schiff, Scott, Serrano, Shimkus, Solis, Stark, Udall, Velazquez, Waxman, Weller, Wu.

Sec. 1 Title is "National Museum of the American Latino Community Commission Act"

Sec. 2 There would be 23 members of the commission, appointed as follows:
7 members by the President;
3 voting and 1 non-voting members by the Speaker;
3 voting and 1 non-voting members by the House Minority Leader;
3 voting and 1 non-voting by the Senate Majority Leader; and
3 voting and 1 non-voting by the Senate Minority Leader.

Members of the Commission should be experienced with planning for and the administration of similar museums; or have a demonstrated commitment to the research or promotion of American Latino life, art, culture, history, etc., and possess expertise in museum administration, fundraising, or other relevant experience.

Sec. 3 The Commission will be tasked with producing the following:
a national conference within 9 months of being formed;
a fundraising plan within 18 months; and
a report on their findings and a recommended legislative plan of action within 18 months.

Sec. 4 Establishes that the Commission will be housed by the Dept. of Interior, which shall provide facilities, administrative support, reimbursement, and travel expenses on a per diem basis. Provides for a Director and staff to be appointed by the Commission.

Sec. 5 Sets deadlines for the report and the termination of the commission.

Sec. 6 Authorizes appropriations of \$2,100,000 in FY2006 and \$1,100,000 in FY2007.

Please contact Joel Najar with Rep. Becerra's office at 6-3748 or Ralph Piña with Rep. Ros-Lehtinen at 5-3931 with any questions.