



PRESS RELEASE

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NONPROFIT PARTNERS TO MOBILIZE LATINO VOTE IN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3

Denver, Aug. 15, 2020. Colorado's oldest Latino charitable nonprofit has launched a Latino voting rights campaign in partnership with other nonprofits serving Colorado's Third Congressional District. The campaign started today in Pueblo, home to the district's largest Latino population of potential voters.

"Our first partnership is with the Pueblo Latino Democratic Forum," said Dr. Mike Cortés, executive director of the Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy, & Research Organization, better known as CLLARO. The Forum's members today started contacting friends, neighbors, relatives, co-workers, parishioners, and others living in Pueblo's underserved neighborhoods.

"The majority of Latinos in Pueblo are U.S. citizens, but in the past, too many have felt voting is a waste of time," said Stephen Varela, chair of the Pueblo Latino Democratic Forum. The Forum was founded as La Raza in 1963 in Pueblo's Southern District. "Today's polling data shows that Latinos can decide who wins the Third District on November 3. So, we're registering first-time voters and reminding them to vote," said Varela. Varela is a US Army veteran and clinical social worker. He holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and serves on a variety of community boards.

CLLARO's partnership with the Forum in Pueblo is underwritten by the Ebrahimi Family Foundation and other nonprofit and business supporters. "CLLARO is looking for other partners and underwriters in other Latino population centers in the Third Congressional District," says Cortés. "We plan to work with other local Latino organizations, depending on how much money we raise."

Cortés is a retired university professor who led the Master of Nonprofit Administration degree program at the University of San Francisco. "The law says that as a charitable nonprofit, CLLARO can't tell Latinos who to vote for, but we can certainly tell them that as U.S. citizens, we all have a responsibility to vote," says Cortés. Cortés adds, "As I read debates in today's news about voter suppression and slowdowns at the U.S. Postal Service, I would urge Coloradans to put this year's election in historical perspective. Latinos have been actively discouraged from voting in southwestern states since 1848. Due to Latinos' relatively high birth rates plus legal immigration, the number of Latino U.S. citizens in Colorado is increasing. We are under-represented in the state legislature, local government, and the U.S. Congress. By 2022, one out of four Coloradans will be Latino. It's time for us to vote!"

CLLARO is a charitable agency incorporated in Denver in 1964 as the Latin American Research & Service Agency (LARASA). Its mission is to empower Latinos through leadership development, advocacy, and policy research to strengthen Colorado. More at <http://www.cllaro.org>.