

**Testimony by**  
Norman Bristol Colón  
Executive Director  
PA Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs

**Before the**  
US Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee's  
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information,  
Federal Services, & International Security

**Hearing**  
"Making the Census Count in Urban America"

**National Constitution Center – Independence Mall**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**  
**Monday, May 11, 2009**  
**1:00 P.M.**

Chairman Thomas R. Carper.

Distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management,  
Government Information, Federal Services, & International Security of the Committee on  
Homeland Security and Government Affairs of the United States Senate.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Good afternoon and welcome to Pennsylvania!

Mr. Chairman, I am Norman Bristol Colon, Executive Director of the Governor's  
Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I am  
grateful to you for inviting me to this so important and timely hearing.

It is symbolic that this hearing is taking place in this landmark city and in this landmark building for such an important discussion and the relevance of the US Census work in generations of Latinos and urban America.

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, the population of Latinos in the United States changed from 35,204,480 in 2000 to 45,378,596 in 2007, representing 15% of the total US population. 60% of Latinos are native born. This population growth has been noted and has created challenges and enormous opportunities.

Today, we have more Puerto Ricans living in the US mainland than on the commonwealth island of Puerto Rico.

As National Chair of the United States Council on Latino Affairs, representatives from various U.S. state Latino councils and commissions, we support and partner with the US Census Bureau, the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute and other local, state and national organizations in pushing for an accurate and successful Decennial 2010 Census through the national aggressive awareness campaign **Hazte Contar Census 2010: Makes Dollars and Sense.**

The result of the Census plays a key role in determining funding for the placement of schools, roads, hospitals, and child-care, among other things. It also contributes to supporting the need for social service programs based on current population at the local

and state level. As representatives of Latino Affairs offices across the country we are committed to working together with the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure a full count of our Latino communities in 2010 and thus effectively meeting the needs of our Latino constituents.

Ensuring that every Latino is accurately counted in the 2010 Census is an integral part of a greater agenda for social justice, political representation and community empowerment. An undercount will have an economic and educational disadvantage to our community. A community that today is the largest minority ethnic group in the nation, yet it also has the highest high school drop-out rates and unemployment rates in America.

I quote a statement by Mr. Angelo Falcon from the National Latino Census Network. Falcón recently said that “the challenges facing an accurate Latino count by 2010 Census in light of the negative environment created by anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiments in this country will be enormous.” Other challenges that will have a great impact are: very mobile community due to many factors; lack of trust in government; hiring practices by the US Census, the socio-economic and educational levels, to name a few. A plan should be developed to reach the documented as well as the undocumented.

Through your sincere dedication, Mr. Chairman we trust you will make sure that every Latino in Pennsylvania is accurately counted in the 2010 Census:

- Urge Congress to use its Congressional power to make sure the Federal government adheres to the Constitutional mandate to count every person in the United States of America

- Identify strategies for Census 2010 bilingual marketing
- Seek for assurance that information collected in the 2010 Census will be completely private and confidential and not be reported to the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement

If current trends continue, the U.S. population will grow to 438 million in 2050. Eighty-two percent of this increase will be due to immigrants arriving from 2005 to 2050 and their U.S. born descendants. The Latino population is the nation's largest minority group and is expected to triple in size and account for most of the population growth from 2005 to 2050. Latinos will make up 29% of America's population in 2050. (Pew Hispanic Center)

In Pennsylvania, the Latino population has grown steadily since 1990, 31 times faster than the rest of the population and accounted for 52% of the population growth. (USHLI)

Data collected in the U.S. Census affects how billions of dollars in federal and state funding is given to communities for neighborhood improvement, public health, education and transportation.

The U.S. Census assists with the apportioning of seats in the United States House of Representatives and the redistricting of state legislatures. Data collected is also used to define school district assignment areas. (U.S. Census Bureau)



History shows that an incomplete or inaccurate census denies Latinos a right granted by the Constitution of the United States- a right to fair representation at all levels of government. An error in population data deprives Latinos federal resources needed to assist communities in forming public policy.

In the last census, 1 million Latinos were not counted. Over the past decade, Latinos have become the fastest growing demographic in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. With more than 560,000 Latino residents, and the trends pointing to a continuation of that growth, the 2010 census will publicly demonstrate the prevalence of Latinos across the country.

Additionally, to better assess what Latinos need in the next census, it is important to examine what provisions currently exist.

Partnerships between the Census and local communities to find door-knockers and workers who are native speakers of the languages with which the most help is needed. Using the language skills of community members allows those who experience difficulty with their materials to feel more comfortable with the person helping them.

- “Questionnaire Assistance Centers” provide a place for those members of the community with language skills to provide help completing the census materials.
  - These began in 2000 and use places such as community-based organization facilities to help with the questionnaires.

- The volunteers who work at these centers receive special training to perform their duties.
- “Complete Count Committees” aid with providing accurate counts of specific groups (geographic, tribal, demographic, etc).
  - These committees are tasked with conducting awareness campaigns alerting citizens of the upcoming Census and encouraging them to participate. Demographic-based committees often pool their resources with surrounding areas to provide a more expansive campaign.

As the decennial measurement draws closer, some major issues face Latinos. These include:

- Ensuring that Latinos are fairly and properly included in the counting.
- To make the census forms linguistically accessible, so that they may be completed by as many citizens as possible.
- The influx of illegal immigration in certain areas.
- Finding a way to encourage Latinos to register with the census amidst issues regarding immigration and an anti-Latino sentiment that some areas (like Hazelton) are undergoing.
- While the Latino population has been long concentrated in the south and west, there is a strong possibility that as work becomes available, the northeastern states could undergo an influx of Latino migration between now and 2010.

Besides having an accurate count of Latinos in the Commonwealth and country, there are several key benefits to a Latino-inclusive census:

- Redistricting will include districts that better represent the prevalence of the Latino community.
- These districts are more likely to yield public officials that reflect the Latino background and will better address the issues facing the community.
- A proper count of Latinos could heavily improve the community's political stature and create a better environment in which Latinos can lobby for legislation that pertains to their causes.
- The rise in population, prevalence and representation will lead to more economic and political development, which can help to produce better legislation.

Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by saying that today Latinos know they can make a difference in the direction of our country. In cities like Lancaster, Reading, Allentown, Bethlehem, York, Harrisburg, Lebanon, Latino students are soon to be or already are the majority of the student population. An accurate count in these areas of the state will help us provide better educational opportunities for these kids and a pathway to their hopes, dreams and aspirations. I strongly believe that an accurate count will level the playing field and will bring our community much closer to the American Dream.

Thank you!

## **Pennsylvania At a Glance**

Hispanic Population

**565,000**

Hispanics as Percent of State Population

**5%**

Median Age of Hispanics

**25**

Median Income, Hispanics 16+

**\$20,238**

Poverty Rate, Hispanics 17 and Younger

**37%**

Hispanic Homeownership

**44%**

Hispanics as Percent of All K-12 Students

**7%**