

# Hispanic leaders encourage political empowerment as vehicle for positive change in Latino community

Hispanic seniors from Texas gathered at the Political Empowerment Luncheon at the National Hispanic Council of Aging's (NHCOA) 2007 Annual Conference to hear national Latino leaders lead a discussion on the importance of civic involvement through the power of the voting as a way to make positive changes in the Latino community.

Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert welcomed the participants to the NHCOA Annual Conference at the luncheon, which is the largest part of the largest three-day gathering in the country specifically focused on the health, financial, educational, and cultural needs of the nearly 2 million Latinos over the age of 65 in the U.S.

Older adults in general tend to vote more readily and follow the issues more closely than younger generations, which is why Dr. Yanira Cruz, NHCOA President and CEO, advised the attendants to hold politicians accountable and make them work for the aging community's vote.

Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil, Dean of the School of Public Affairs at UCLA and NHCOA Board Member, addressed the importance of focusing attention on the creation of a new agenda for the aging Latino community, which includes the critical need for retirement planning.

"The theme of the conference really underlines the need for elders to participate in the political process because without that partici-

pation we won't be able to meet the needs of this new agenda," said Dr. Torres-Gil.

Dr. Elena Alvarado, President of the National Latina Health Network, discussed the importance of the upcoming election. "We like to get together and talk about what happened during the last episode of the novela, but we need to be discussing and educating each other on the voting issues," she said.

The luncheon's keynote speaker, well-established civil rights leader Raúl Yzaguirre fired up the crowd with a compelling call to action. "Brothers and sisters, we need to make a change. We need understand the importance of these issues and instill a culture of participation," Yzaguirre said.

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