

NHLA National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

June 16, 2016

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Opposition to Amendments 26 and 27 to H.R. 5293, Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2017

Dear Congressman:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 40 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to strongly urge you to vote against Amendments 26 and 27 to H.R. 5293, Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2017. These amendments would prohibit the use of funds to enlist recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to the U.S. military. NHLA recommends a “no” vote on these amendments, and any similar legislation. **NHLA will closely monitor the votes on H.R. 5293, including these and other floor amendments, for inclusion in future NHLA scorecards evaluating Member support for the Latino community.**

Proposals to prohibit DACA holders from enlisting in the military are misguided attempts to politicize the patriotism and dedication to service that compels many immigrants to serve the country they call home. These amendments insult those immigrant veterans who have answered the call to service, and diminish the deep pride many DACA holders have for the U.S. Latinos and immigrants have a long history of military service. In 2011, 16.9 percent of new military recruits were Hispanic.¹ More than 1 million Latinos are U.S. military veterans.² In 2008, 65,000 immigrants were serving on active duty in the armed forces.³ Instead of barring dedicated DACA holders from serving our country, we should find ways to honor their contributions by working towards comprehensive immigration reform.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns. Please contact NHLA through Andrea Senteno, of MALDEF, at asenteno@maldef.org, or Laura Esquivel, of Hispanic Federation, at lesquivel@hispanicfederation.org, with any questions regarding this letter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderón
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Cuban American National Council
Farmworker Justice
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Latino Justice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Council of La Raza
National Hispana Leadership Institute
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Puerto Rican Coalition
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation

¹ Erika Sanchez, *U.S. Military, A Growing Latino Army*, NBC NEWS, January 1, 2013, <http://nblatino.com/2013/01/01/u-s-military-a-growin>

² U.S. Census Bureau, *Hispanic Heritage Month 2015*, Sept. 14, 2015, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2015/cb15-ff18.ht>

³ Jeanne Batalova, *Immigrants in the U.S. Armed Forces*, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE, May 15, 2008, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/arti>