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# Latino Political Power in California

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**CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE**  
**LATINO POLITICAL POWER IN CALIFORNIA**

SUBMITTED TO

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AND

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BY

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*For my loving parents, Gustavo and Cristina.*

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## **Introduction**

California has become a majority-minority state. Latinos, now close to 40 percent of the state's total population, are predicted to become the majority by the middle of the century. Having lived in the California territory in the years preceding statehood, Latinos hold a unique place in its history. From the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, through the constitutional refounding of 1879, and up until the Chicano movement of the 1960s, Latinos had little access to California's major political institutions. But over the past two decades, Latinos have done something remarkable. While still a minority in the state, they have mobilized to the point where they and their allies have taken firm control of the state's political institutions.

A watershed moment came in 1994 when California's voters enacted Proposition 187. The measure, often seen as demonstration of white, anti-immigrant, and anti-Latino sentiments, galvanized the Latino community on a scale not seen since the days of César Chávez. Between 1994 and 2008, Latinos nearly doubled their total portion of the statewide electorate and their representation in the state Legislature. Between 1974 and 1994, the Latino population of California had tripled, but this rapid population growth did not immediately translate into increased political power. But between 1994 and 2010, Latinos achieved political clout to the point where four Latinos have served as Speaker of the Assembly, including the current Speaker, John Pérez. The Latino public has elected into office Latino candidates who have earned powerful political posts in both the state and federal governments. How did Latinos acquire this new political power? How much political power do they have now? How have they used it? What does this mean for their future presence in California politics?

In answering these questions, I will trace the development of Latino political power in California from its earliest days to the present. By doing so, I hope to elaborate upon the political obstacles Latinos overcame to arrive at their formidable position today, and to discuss the implications of their political ascendance. This will require quantifying the growth in Latino political clout while tracing the effects of their mobilization on California policy. Having interviewed prominent Latino politicians such as Senator Art Torres and Commissioner Gabino Aguirre, I will tell the story of Latino politics from those who know it best. I shall examine multiple factors, such as the relationship dynamic of key Latino political allies and figures, and the effects of increased political power on Latino material well being. The ultimate goal of this political study is to see how Latinos became the state's most powerful minority.

California's future and Latinos' future are now completely intertwined. If we are to learn anything about California politics now, we must understand Latino politics. It is my hope that this thesis, as an investigation into the Latino side of the story, will help others learn about what lies ahead for California.

Enjoy,

Gustavo Cubias II

## **Literature Review of Latino Political Power in California**

In 1994, post-Cold War cuts in federal defense spending cost many Californians their jobs in manufacturing and aerospace.<sup>1</sup> The rising unemployment level and economic recession contributed to the electorate's growing criticism of groups it viewed as a burden to the state. As part of his platform for reelection that same year, Republican Governor Pete Wilson supported a measure on the same ballot, Proposition 187, which sought to eliminate various social services, such as public education and nonemergency medical care, to undocumented immigrants.<sup>2</sup> The measure resonated with a majority of voters who agreed with the argument that California's "liberal" welfare policies acted as a "magnet for illegal immigrants" who overcrowded schools and cost jobs for taxpayers.<sup>3</sup> Proposition 187 passed with nearly two-thirds of the vote, with Pete Wilson firmly retaining the governorship against Democratic challenger Kathleen Brown.<sup>4</sup> A subsequent measure on the 1996 ballot, Proposition 209, sought to end affirmative action programs in public schools and state agencies and also passed with a firm majority.<sup>5</sup> Scholars argue that a fear of the growing Latino and minority populations in the state motivated white voters to support the initiatives as a means of retaining the economic and political solidarity they

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<sup>1</sup> California Legislative Analyst's Office, "January 1995: The California Economy," [http://www.lao.ca.gov/1995/010195\\_calguide/cgep1.html](http://www.lao.ca.gov/1995/010195_calguide/cgep1.html).

<sup>2</sup> Adrian D. Pantoja and Gary M. Segura, "Fear and Loathing in California: Contextual Threat and Political Sophistication among Latino Voters," *Political Behavior* Vol. 25, No. 3 (Sep., 2003), pp. 266 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3657321>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "1994 California Statement of the Vote," California Secretary of State's Office, <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/sov/1994-general/1994-general-sov.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> "1996 California Statement of the Vote," California Secretary of State's Office, <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/sov/1996-general/1996-general-sov.pdf>

perceived as at risk.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly enough, 63 percent of white voters supported both measures while 77 percent of Latino voters opposed both.<sup>7</sup>

Until this time, political scientists had characterized the Latino population in California as a “sleeping giant.”<sup>8</sup> Before 1990, the Latino population in California steadily increased with each election but registration among eligible Latinos never kept up.<sup>9</sup> But with the sudden spike in anti-immigrant sentiments statewide and racially-infused civil disorder in major cities such as Los Angeles in the early 1990s, the giant awoke. The percentage of eligible Latinos registered to vote in the state jumped 15 percent between 1990 and 1996, from 52 percent to 67 percent, more than any other six-year period of time in its history.<sup>10</sup> Latino leaders and activists mobilized thousands of potential Latino voters throughout California to build political clout that reflected their increasing numbers. Exit polls indicate that since 1992, Latinos have gone from comprising roughly 7 percent of the California electorate to 23 percent in 2008.<sup>11</sup> Of 11 statewide races for president, U.S. senator, and governor from 1990 to 2000, the racial and ethnic vote was the margin of victory in seven races while the Latino vote alone was the margin of victory in three.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Rodney E. Hero and Caroline J. Tolbert, “A Racial/Ethnic Diversity Interpretation of Politics and Policy in the States of the U.S.,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Aug., 1996), pp. 851-871.

<sup>7</sup> Pantoja and Segura, “Fear and Loathing in California,” pg 266, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3657321>.

<sup>8</sup> Mark H. Drayse and Raphael Sonenshein, “The Political Geography of Coalitions in an Age of Immigration: The Case of Los Angeles,” *The New Political Geography of California* (Berkeley; Berkeley Press, 2008) pg 109.

<sup>9</sup> Belinda Reyes et. al, “A Portrait of Race and Ethnicity in California,” *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 172 and pg 8, [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_201BRR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_201BRR.pdf).

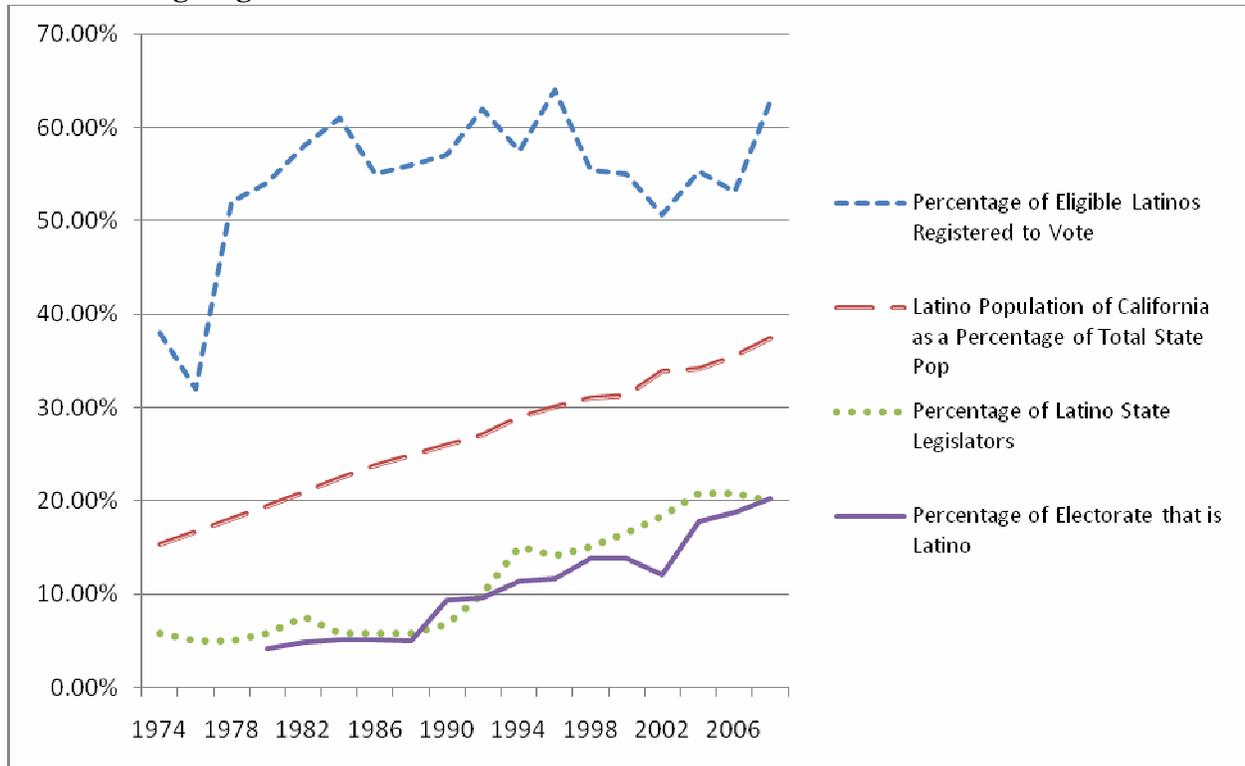
<sup>10</sup> Luis Ricardo Fraga and Ricardo Ramirez, “Latino Political Incorporation in California, 1990-2000,” *Latinos and Public Policy: An Agenda for Opportunity*, (Berkeley; Berkeley Press, 2003) pg 309.

<sup>11</sup> Fraga and Ramirez, “Latino Political Incorporation,” pg 309 and “Hispanics in the 2008 Election: California,” from *Pew Hispanic Center*, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/vote2008/California.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pg 303

Latinos responded, so much so that the effects manifested themselves in the state government. The percentage of Latinos serving in the state Legislature grew from 6 percent to 18 percent between 1990 and 2002.<sup>13</sup> By 1996, Cruz Bustamante, originally elected in 1993, became the first Latino Speaker of the Assembly. The giant responded quickly, and would continue to grow. The following chart traces the changes in Latino political incorporation along their increasing share of the total state electorate, total state population, and total membership of the Legislature.

**Figure 1.1- Latino Share of State Electorate, Legislature, Population and Registration Rates Among Eligible Latino Voters**



\*Source- Compiled using data from California Department of Finance Demographics Research Unit, Los Angeles Times Exit Polls, Census Current Population Surveys, National Association of Latino Elected Officials, and The Public Policy Institute of California- Percentages based on author's calculations- See appendix for citation data.

<sup>13</sup> "Latino Legislative Member Directory," California Latino Legislative Caucus website and author's calculations, <http://www2.legislature.ca.gov/LatinoCaucus/MemberDirectory.asp>

Since the turbulent times of 1994, the Latino population in California has come to play a larger role in state politics. Now, in 2011, the percentage of Latinos serving in the Legislature remains steady at 19 percent, with three more Latino assembly members having served as Speaker of the Assembly, including current Speaker John A. Perez.<sup>14</sup> Registration among eligible Latino voters has remained steady at 63 percent, with total state population at an all-time high of 37 percent.<sup>15</sup> In the 2010 midterm elections, Latinos made up 22 percent of the state electorate, compared with 18 percent in 2008 and 12 percent in 2006.<sup>16</sup> Attorney General Jerry Brown captured the governorship with 64 percent of the Latino vote, while his Republican opponent Meg Whitman won only 30 percent.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, Latino representation in government and the electorate has signaled a new era for California politics. But how much political power do Latinos have in California? Although statistics suggest that Latinos have more political power than they once did 20 years ago, there still exists the need to analyze the scope of this new influence. For example, do Latinos possess so much political power that no statewide candidate or measure can succeed without their approval? What kind of solidarity and unity exists among Latinos? Do they constitute a formidable voting bloc? In answering these questions, the main topic of discussion becomes one of what Latinos have achieved politically since their galvanization.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Census CPS,  
<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/Table%2004b.xls>, Census quick facts,  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>

<sup>16</sup> Jack Chang, "Latino Vote Helps Dems Keep California Domination," *The Sacramento Bee*, November 6, 2010, <http://www.sacbee.com/2010/11/06/3165639/latino-vote-helps-dems-keep-california.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Political power comes in many forms, and as such, has many different meanings. Analysis of Latino political power requires a discussion of its meaning. Dr. Clifton McCleskey provides a pragmatic definition of political power in *Political Power and American Democracy*. According to Dr. McCleskey, the “political” part of the term refers to the “power derived from the processes and institutions of government,” while the essence of power is “the capacity of persons to have their own way to prevail over opposition on matters of concern to them.”<sup>18</sup> More specifically, he views power as a “casual force” that individuals can use to confront opposition.<sup>19</sup> But Errol Harris points out in his own treatise that political power does not only concern the ability to apply a “casual force,” but that it also contains an innate, democratic element because while all political power is not “necessarily exercised for the good of all people,” it still requires an “acquiescence” of people.<sup>20</sup> More specifically, this acquiescence requires direct cooperation of large groups of people and “indirect cooperation of the entire community.” Taking both observations from both authors into consideration, power, at its root, concerns the ability of an individual or group to pursue an end, even in the presence of opposition. As it pertains to politics, power in our democratic system is diffused throughout many institutions including, but not limited to, the courts, the Legislature, the executive, and the electorate. Dr. Franz Neumann writes that “political power is social power focused on the state. It involves control of other men for the purpose of influencing the behavior of the state, its legislative, administrative and judicial

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<sup>18</sup> Clifton McCleskey, *Political Power and American Democracy*, (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole, 1989), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Errol Harris, “Political Power,” *Ethics* 68, 1 (Oct. 1957): 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2379564>.

activities.”<sup>21</sup> Measuring political power therefore requires an assessment of the ability to pursue an end within these institutions.

Multiple factors affect the amassing of political power and its exercise, as does the process of dealing with opposition, but understanding a group’s political power mainly involves understanding their forms of power within political and government institutions. Because, as Harris argues, political power in the United States, is a democratic activity involving multiple actors, one must understand the forms and amount of political power a group possess relative to that of other groups or individuals. Truly understanding the political power of Latinos in California thus requires an analysis of their influence in statewide institutions such as the state Legislature or the executive branch.

Not every state or electorate in the United States is alike, however. California has its own history of development with respect to state government and statewide politics. Analyzing the literature of Latino political power requires discussion of where political power matters in California. With this in mind, I will examine the modern development of political power throughout the different statewide institutions first, and then discuss what political power Latinos have amassed in this context.

Only twenty years after the ratification of the second California Constitution in 1879, special interests had a monopoly on political power in the state government. Edward J. Erler observes that “by the turn of the century [1900] it had become painfully evident that the California Constitution, even in its revised form, was inadequate to curb the power of special

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<sup>21</sup>Franz L. Neumann, “ Approaches to the Study of Political Power,” *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 65, No. 2 (Jun., 1950), pp. 161-180, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2145519>

interest groups that sought to convert California government into the instrument of their special leadings.”<sup>22</sup> Among the most powerful of the special interests, the Southern Pacific Railroad Company possessed the most influence among legislators.<sup>23</sup> It was the Southern Pacific Railroad along with its network of associated corporations and business interest groups, that “ruled the state” for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> Tired with the status quo, Hiram Johnson ran as the anti-Southern Pacific Railroad Co. candidate with a Lincoln-Roosevelt platform of spearheading direct democracy measures for the state.<sup>25</sup> With his eventual election, Californians adopted the initiative, referendum, and recall processes in 1911.<sup>26</sup> These collective political reforms, part of the Progressive Movement, sought to clean up California’s “moral and political health,” in way that delegated power to the populace and would hopefully prevent corrupt influences from controlling the state government again.<sup>27</sup> For the time being, political power came out of the hands of the deeply entrenched special interests and party systems they catered to, and into the hands of constituents. Political power shifted to the California electorate. As Jackson Putnam writes, public officials could not rely upon a “functioning party system as a source of direction, ideas, and ideology,” which “required an

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<sup>22</sup> Edward J. Erlner, “Californians and Their Constitution,” *The California Republic*, (Lanham; Rowman and Littlefield, 2004) pg 99.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Joshua Spivak, “California's Recall: Adoption of the ‘Grand Bounce’ for Elected Officials,” *California History* Vol. 82, No. 2 (2004), pp. 20-37 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25161725> .

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pg 20

ability to devise policies according to practical realities” in a way that pleased voters.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, politicians and office holders now needed to address the demands of their newly empowered constituencies. But by the 1930s and 1940s, the progressive attack on the special interest monopolies, and the political party system that had helped them, actually had unintended consequences.

Even though California officeholders needed to respond to constituent demands, the lack of direction from political party leadership created a vacuum of political support that lobbyists filled.<sup>29</sup> “Superlobbyists” such as Arthur Samish pressured legislators to support legislation that favored their clients’ interests in exchange for campaign contributions and did so to the extent that the state Legislature became a political “commodity market”.<sup>30</sup> The political power in the state again shifted to the Legislature and the special interests it served, but only the strong nature of the governorship could go toe-to-toe with it. The election of Edmund G. “Pat” Brown, Sr. in 1958 began a series of events in which the governorship of California showed unprecedented political clout. During his administration, Governor Brown challenged “the people of California to become involved with the big problems of their state, to care personally and deeply about them, and to pay the taxes to help solve them.”<sup>31</sup> Leading in the establishment of statewide projects such as the establishment of the California Water Plan, a competitive university and state college system, and new infrastructure development, Pat Brown flexed the political muscle

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<sup>28</sup> Jackson K. Putnam, “The Pattern of Modern California Politics,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), pg 26, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3640787>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, pg 25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> Roger Rapoport, “The Political Odyssey of Pat Brown” *California History*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Winter, 1985), pp. 2-9 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25158268>.

of the governorship in such a way that the electorate took heed to his accomplishments and voted him in for a second term in 1962.<sup>32</sup> As the historian Roger Rapoport notes, “people in Sacramento were already talking about a third term for this Democrat who had humiliated Nixon and demonstrated remarkable legislative artistry.”<sup>33</sup> Although Pat Brown’s administration serves as an example of how political power in California has concentrated itself in different ways among the electorate and the state government, more recent political developments have shown the complicated nature of the flow of political power.

Sacramento Bee journalist Dan Walters writes that during the 1966 gubernatorial campaign season, Pat Brown and his challenger, Ronald Reagan, “jostled virtually over every facet of political policy,” but that the one issue “on which Brown, Regan, and virtually every California politician of the era” agreed upon, was the need to create a full-time, professional Legislature.<sup>34</sup> While there existed this general consensus for reforms, Speaker of the Assembly Jesse M. Unruh saw professionalization of the legislature as an opportunity to “strengthen the body, particularly in relation to interest groups and the governor.”<sup>35</sup> With the passage of Proposition 1A in 1966, state legislators now had the ability to raise their own salaries, have unlimited legislative sessions, and hire multitudes of support staff.<sup>36</sup> Professionalization of the Legislature tied in closely with its eventual institutionalization as it became a more consequential

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pg 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Dan Walters, “Broken Promise: The Rise and Fall of the California Legislature,” *The California Republic*, (Lanham; Rowman and Littlefield, 2004) pg 127.

<sup>35</sup> Peverill Squire, “The Theory of Legislative Institutionalization and the California Assembly,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Nov., 1992), pp. 1026-1054, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2132107>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pg 1031

body in state politics.<sup>37</sup> Speaker Unruh amassed more political clout by “centralizing” the Legislature, and his protégé, Willie Brown, took advantage of this clout in a way that empowered it even more.<sup>38</sup>

Willie Brown’s election as Speaker in 1980 signaled an even stronger shift in political power to the California Legislature. The creation of new environmental and consumer regulatory bodies, centralization of budgetary decision-making at the state level after Proposition 13, and rise of public employee unions all led to a surge in interest group activity.<sup>39</sup> The new political loyalists and campaign contributors that came with the lobbyist surge helped turn the capitol into a quid-pro-quo machine driven by “internal, crassly political dynamics” once again.<sup>40</sup> In the late 1980s, a Federal Bureau of Investigation sting led to the arrest and conviction of several staffers and legislators, which promptly led to voter frustration with corruption, and the eventual implementation of term limits with the passage of Proposition 140 in 1990.<sup>41</sup>

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the various political institutions in California vied for political power in such a way that no clear victor emerged. Power constantly shifted between the legislative and special-interest webs of the state Legislature, headstrong governors, and angry voters. But throughout this entire process, the courts came to play a larger role. After the 1970 census created a power battle between Governor Reagan and Speaker Bob Moretti over

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pg 1028

<sup>38</sup> Dan Walters, “Broken Promise,” pg 129.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pg 131

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pg 132.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

redrawing legislative districts, the California Supreme Court intervened.<sup>42</sup> The court then imposed its own redistricting scheme for the 1974 elections.<sup>43</sup> The decision, coupled with the U.S. Supreme Court’s “one man-one vote” decision in *Reynolds v. Simms* in 1964, created a political map unpopular with incumbents.<sup>44</sup> Many of them chose to retire rather than lose an election, and the largest freshman class of legislators in the history of California arrived in 1975.<sup>45</sup> While the California Supreme Court does not hold the same kind of political initiative that other institutions do, it has still greatly affected the political actions of the electorate, the state Legislature, and the governorship.

Political power in California now has a more inclusive definition. It has come to resemble Dr. Franz Neumann’s definition—namely, a “social power focused on the state [that] involves control of other men for the purpose of influencing the behavior of the state, its legislative, administrative and judicial activities.” Amassing political power in the present may require influence in all of these institutions, but Latinos have had more influence in some than others. The following literature explains how one can quantify Latino political influence.

Luis Ricardo Fraga and Ricardo Ramirez write in “Latino Political Incorporation in California: 1990-2000” that analyzing Latino political power requires measuring their political incorporation into state politics.<sup>46</sup> Political incorporation, they argue, “can be defined as the extent to which self-identified group interests are articulated, represented, and met in public

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<sup>42</sup> Dan Walters, “Broken Promise,” pg 129.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Fraga and Ramirez, “Latino Political Incorporation” pg 304.

policymaking.”<sup>47</sup> The incorporation of these group interests must be measured in three different dimensions: electoral, representational, and policy-based.<sup>48</sup> The electoral dimension concerns the influence of Latinos through their proportion of the general population, the electorate, and voting blocs. The representational setting deals with the “presence of Latinos in elected positions in state and local governments, their presence within majority and minority legislative delegations, and their presence in positions of formal policymaking, such as Speaker, committee chairs, and partisan leadership.”<sup>49</sup> Finally, the policy-based dimension of political incorporation concerns “the extent to which Latinos receive specified benefits from public policy.”<sup>50</sup> Such benefits include, but are not limited to; educational access, job opportunities, and “indicators of material condition” such as median income, poverty rates, educational levels, and homeownership rates.<sup>51</sup> The Fraga-Ramirez incorporation model therefore requires analyzing what kind strides Latinos have made in different institutions, and the indicators of such success. As such, the model fits with the aforementioned theoretical and pragmatic realities of political power in California.

Within the three incorporation dimensions, one must measure access, opportunity, and institutionalization as a means of quantifying the degree to which Latinos have succeeded in them.<sup>52</sup> These three *analytical* criteria have different meanings within the three incorporation dimensions. By knowing what these three criteria mean in the different dimensions, one can

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pg 303.

provide examples of Latino political power. For this reason, I shall explain the meanings of the three analytical criteria, followed by discussion of what political power Latinos have acquired according to this model.

As it relates to electoral incorporation, access refers to Latino potential to comprise a major component of the electorate. This potential depends on increase of Latino births within California and naturalization of Latino immigrants in the state.<sup>53</sup> Access falls when Latino population decreases, and conversely, rises when Latino population rises. Opportunity for electoral incorporation refers to “when percentages of Latinos eligible to vote or registration rates among them grow substantially.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, when more eligible Latinos register, the opportunity to better incorporate themselves as a major part of the electorate increases. Successful institutionalizing into the electorate requires that Latinos vote together “as a sizeable bloc for successful candidates and positions on statewide referenda.”<sup>55</sup> Electoral political incorporation therefore measures the success of Latinos in comprising a large portion of the electorate that not only affects statewide elections, but also wins consistently over time.

Latinos have shown increasing success in all of these areas since the 1990s. As mentioned previously, the Latino population has gone up from 15 percent of total state population in 1974 in [year] to 37 percent in 2008.<sup>56</sup> Fraga and Ramirez note that from 1990 to

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pg 305.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Population Estimates from CA Dept. of Finance Demographic Research Unit- **For 1970-1990 Data:** “Revised Ethnic Population Estimates: July 1970 to July 1990.” , **For 1990-2000 Data-** "E-3: California Race/Ethnic Population Estimates: Components of Change for California Counties, April 1990 to April 2000," **For**

1995, the Latino population increased by 1,414, 112 individuals, 87 percent of which were born in-state.<sup>57</sup> This means that the Latino electorate could expect a considerable increase in its voting potential once these individuals reach voting age as soon as 2013. This means greater access to electoral incorporation. Opportunity has also increased, as Latinos have gone from comprising 5 percent of the statewide electorate in 1988 to roughly 20 percent in 2008.<sup>58</sup> The registration rate overall for Latinos has also increased from 38 percent in 1974 to 63 percent in 2008.<sup>59</sup> While the overall registration for whites is 18 percent higher than for Latinos, the increase in Latino participation is twice as great as it is for whites.<sup>60</sup> As such, the opportunity for institutionalization has slowly improved over time for Latinos. As Fraga and Ramirez note, the

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**2000-2009**, "Current Population Survey: California Two-Year Average Series" **all found at** <http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/view.php#objCollapsiblePanelEstimatesAnchor>

<sup>57</sup> Fraga and Ramirez, "Latino Political Incorporation," pg 308

<sup>58</sup> **Electorate Percentages Compiled from 8 different sources:** **1.** U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Reported Voting and Registration Reports, "' Population Characteristics (P20) Reports and Detailed Tables-1980's" <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/index.html>, **2.** U.S. Census Bureau: Current Population Survey: " Table 4b: Reported Voting and Registration of the Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2006," <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2006/tables.html> **3.** U.S. Census Bureau: Current Population Survey, "Table 4b: Reported Voting and Registration of the Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2008," <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html> **4.** U.S. Census Bureau: Current Population Survey: "Table 4a. Reported Voting and Registration of the Total Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2004," <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2004/tables.html> **5.** U.S. Census Bureau: Current Population Survey: Reported Voting and Registration of the Total Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2000" <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2000/tables.html> **6.** NALEO Education Fund, " 2010 Latino Electorate Profile" pg 4 [http://www.naleo.org/downloads/CA\\_2010\\_Primary\\_Profile\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.naleo.org/downloads/CA_2010_Primary_Profile_FINAL.pdf) **7.** Los Angeles Times Exit Polls found at <http://www.latimes.com/la-statsheetindex,0,440052.htmlstory>, **8.** Matt a Barreto, "Minority Participation and the California Recall: Latino, Black and Asian Voting Trends, 1990-2003." PS: Political Science and Politics Vol. 37, No. 1 (Jan., 2004), pp. 11-14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4488753>

<sup>59</sup> Reyes, "A Portrait of Race and Ethnicity in California," pg 172 and pg 8 [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_201BRR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_201BRR.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Fraga and Ramirez, "Latino Political Incorporation," pg 309.

minority vote composed the margin of victory in 7 of 11 statewide races for president, U.S senator, and governor from 1990 to 2000, with the Latino vote determining the outcome in three; Barbara Boxer's senatorial campaigns in 1992 and 1998, and Diane Feinstein's senatorial reelection in 1994.<sup>61</sup> More recently, 74 percent of Latinos in California voted for Barack Obama, the winning candidate, in 2008.<sup>62</sup> In 2010, Senator Barbara Boxer won 66 percent of the Latino vote on the way to defeating her opponent, Carly Fiorina, who won 31 percent of the Latino vote.<sup>63</sup> In the 2010 gubernatorial race, a victorious Jerry Brown won a similar percentage of the Latino vote, 63 percent, while Meg Whitman won 34 percent.<sup>64</sup> That Latinos have consistently voted together in these elections over the past 20 years, and that they did so for the winning candidate, suggests a higher degree of institutionalization as a voting bloc. More specifically, over 60 percent of Latinos have consistently identified with the Democratic Party since 1990, with 65 percent of Latinos voting Democratic in 2010.<sup>65</sup> That Latinos vote as a bloc for the same party suggests an increase in successful electoral incorporation.

As far as representation goes, Latinos have had to make strides in incorporation access, opportunity, and institutionalization. Better access concerns the amount of open or competitive seats in state or local government that Latinos have a reasonable chance of winning, while better

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pg 303.

<sup>62</sup> Mark Hugo Lopez, "The Hispanic Vote in 2008," *Pew Hispanic Center*, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/98.pdf>, pg 2.

<sup>63</sup> "The Latino Vote in the 2010 Elections," *Pew Hispanic Research Center*, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1790/2010-midterm-elections-exit-poll-hispanic-vote>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Fraga and Ramirez "Latino Political Incorporation," pg 313 and "Just the Facts: Latino Likely Voters in California," *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg [1http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_LatinoVotersJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_LatinoVotersJTF.pdf)

opportunity entails Latino candidates winning elections to state office.<sup>66</sup> Institutionalization mainly involves Latinos constituting a “sizeable portion” of the state Legislature, while also holding influential positions within the two chambers and dominant party structure.<sup>67</sup> As the Latino population increased, so did the amount of majority Latino voting districts after the 1990 and 2000 census reapportionment.<sup>68</sup> With the election of 53 new Latino officials to the state Legislature between 1990 and 2010, Latinos came to comprise 19 percent of the Legislature, three times the amount in 1990.<sup>69</sup> Since then, Cruz Bustamante, Antonio Villaraigosa, Fabian Nuñez, and John Perez, all Latino assembly members, became Speaker.<sup>70</sup> In the Senate, many Latino senators, such as Gloria Romero, and Jenny Oropeza, have received committee chairmanships.<sup>71</sup> As such, Latinos have not only grasped opportunities to improve their representation in state government, but have also developed a commanding presence.

Measuring Latino policy incorporation proves more difficult. According to Fraga and Ramirez, the lack of comprehensive studies on policy accomplishments of Latino legislators has made their analysis profoundly difficult.<sup>72</sup> As a result, it becomes even more difficult to gauge the success of Latino legislators in articulating the interests of the Latino community, setting an

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<sup>66</sup> Fraga and Ramirez “Latino Political Incorporation,” pg 306.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Fraga and Ramirez “Latino Political Incorporation,” pg 320

<sup>69</sup> “Latino Legislative Member Directory,” California Latino Legislative Caucus website and author’s calculations, <http://www2.legislature.ca.gov/LatinoCaucus/MemberDirectory.asp>

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> California Political Almanac 2007-2008, *CQ Press Online Editions*, <http://library.cqpress.com.ezproxy.libraries.claremont.edu/cpa/toc.php?source=California+Political+Almanac+2007-2008&mode=cpa-toc&level=3&values=Ch.+6+-+The+Legislature~Senate%2C+A-Z>

<sup>72</sup> Fraga and Ramirez “Latino Political Incorporation,” pg 324

agenda to meet these interests, or in enacting policies that meet these goals.<sup>73</sup> But as a guideline, Fraga and Ramirez note that any legislation that addresses the number of issues the Latino population responds to, such as health care access or education, can still be used as a means of analyzing policy incorporation.<sup>74</sup> Any policy that meets the needs of the Latino population can be used as an example, even if it does not specifically target Latinos.

Either way, defining the analytical criteria for policy incorporation can still assist in defining what types of legislation contribute to success among Latinos in this area. Access to policy incorporation entails the state Legislature addressing issues of great concern to the Latino population with frequency, while great policy opportunity “exists to the extent that laws and ordinances are enacted that seriously consider the needs and interests of Latino communities.”<sup>75</sup> Improved institutionalization then naturally implies that Latinos “experience an improvement in their material well-being as a result of enacted policies.”<sup>76</sup> Several examples illustrate that Latinos have had some success with this type of legislation.

The Latino community in California considers increased access to health benefits, higher public education spending, and a reduction in poverty rates some of their primary legislative interests. 49 percent of Latinos believe that spending on state public universities should be a high priority, compared to 20 percent of whites.<sup>77</sup> 70 percent of Latinos show extreme concern over

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Fraga and Ramirez “Latino Political Incorporation,”306

<sup>75</sup> Fraga and Ramirez “Latino Political Incorporation,”306

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Mark Baldassare et. al, “Californians and Higher Education,” *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 8, [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/survey/S\\_1110MBS.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/survey/S_1110MBS.pdf).

how budget cuts will affect education spending, as opposed to 55 percent of whites.<sup>78</sup> 57 percent of Latinos say that the state will not have enough college educated residents in 20 years, while 84 percent also say it is very important for California's future, which is 10 percentage points higher than whites on both issues.<sup>79</sup> Latino concern over these issues correlates with their economic and educational success. The poverty rates for Latinos and African Americans (17.8 percent and 20.1 percent, respectively) are much higher than poverty rates among Asians (9.7 percent) and whites (7.5 percent)<sup>80</sup> Between 1989 and 1997, less than 48 percent of Latinos in California had health insurance, the least of any ethnic group, compared with roughly 72 percent of whites and 60 percent of Asians, over the same period of time.<sup>81</sup> College completion rates remained below 7 percent for Latinos from 1970 to 1997, while they nearly doubled for whites.<sup>82</sup>

The state Legislature has responded to such trends. Between 1998 and 2008, spending on health increased from about \$9.5 billion to almost \$21 billion, at an average annual growth rate of almost 8 percent.<sup>83</sup> Spending for social services increased from about \$6.5 billion to almost \$10.5 billion.<sup>84</sup> Between 1990 and 2000, higher education spending went up 60 percent while K-

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, pg 12.

<sup>80</sup> "Just the Facts: Poverty in California," *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 1  
[http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_PovertyJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_PovertyJTF.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> Reyes, "A Portrait of Race and Ethnicity," pg 74  
[http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_201BRR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_201BRR.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> Ibid pg, 62.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

12 education spending went up 40 percent.<sup>85</sup> These increases in social services and education tied in closely with the Speakerships of Cruz Bustamante, Antonio Villaraigosa, and Fabian Nuñez. In 1997, Cruz Bustamante sponsored AB 1217, which established a tax break and incentive program for businesses in communities with high unemployment and high poverty rates.<sup>86</sup> Then Speaker Villaraigosa sponsored AB 873, which repealed the sunset on the California Food Assistance Program and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, in addition to expanding eligibility.<sup>87</sup> Fabian Nunez sponsored AB 132, which expanded Medical prescription drug benefits for individuals not qualifying for Medicare.<sup>88</sup> Although it cannot be said that these policies and spending increases were designed specifically to address Latino concerns, the Latino community still benefitted from the efforts of Latino legislators. Even though the economic recession of 2008 has brought unemployment among Latinos in California to its highest in years, Latinos still benefitted from these policies. The issue of undocumented Latino immigrants who cannot afford to attend public universities or find employment has had deep consequences in overall Latino policy institutionalization, but Latinos have still had some success as a group either way.

Although Latinos have made “substantial” gains in electoral and representational institutionalization, their success in policy benefits, and ultimately socioeconomic growth, will

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<sup>85</sup> “Health and Human Services Overview,” *The California Legislative Analyst’s Office*, pg 1 [http://www.lao.ca.gov/handouts/Health/2009/Health\\_and\\_Human\\_Services\\_05\\_27\\_09.pdf](http://www.lao.ca.gov/handouts/Health/2009/Health_and_Human_Services_05_27_09.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> “AB 1217 Legislative Information,” *California Legislative Counsel*, pg 1, [http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/97-98/bill/asm/ab\\_1201-1250/ab\\_1217\\_bill\\_19971003\\_chaptered.pdf](http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/97-98/bill/asm/ab_1201-1250/ab_1217_bill_19971003_chaptered.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> “AB 873 Legislative Information,” *California Legislative Counsel*, pg 1, [http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/99-00/bill/asm/ab\\_0851-0900/ab\\_873\\_cfa\\_19990904\\_184430\\_asm\\_floor.html](http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/99-00/bill/asm/ab_0851-0900/ab_873_cfa_19990904_184430_asm_floor.html)

<sup>88</sup> “AB 132 Legislative Information,” *California Legislative Counsel*, pg 11 [http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/05-06/bill/asm/ab\\_0101-0150/ab\\_132\\_bill\\_20060120\\_chaptered.pdf](http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/05-06/bill/asm/ab_0101-0150/ab_132_bill_20060120_chaptered.pdf)

require, as it always has, negotiation of mutual self interest with other groups.<sup>89</sup> While this political incorporation model considerably encompasses the range of issues and institutions pertaining to Latino political power, it does not provide a means of measuring the inherent value in political alliances. For this reason, it becomes necessary to discuss how other models of political incorporation take into consideration the importance of minority-majority political allegiances. Doing so provides more insight as to whether Latinos possess a great deal of political power alone or if they have benefitted mainly from being part of a larger group.

Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb emphasize the importance of cross-ethnic political allegiances in the ascension of Latino political power in California. Considered “one of the most important contemporary models of minority politics,” the Browning, Marshall, Tabb model of political incorporation suggests that minorities cannot succeed without forming partnerships with the majority.<sup>90</sup> Searching for “a conception of minority political action and position that linked mobilization to policy, that demonstrated the connection between the passions, interests, and actions of mobilization and the governmental response-if any,” they found that the “key to the higher levels of responsiveness was not representation but coalition.”<sup>91</sup> Political incorporation of minority groups into a dominant coalition provided the link between mobilization and government responsiveness.<sup>92</sup> It followed

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<sup>89</sup> Fraga and Ramirez, “Latino Political Incorporation,” pg 332.

<sup>90</sup> Raphael J. Sonenshein and Susan H. Pinkus “The Dynamics of Latino Political Incorporation: The 2001 Los Angeles Mayoral Election as Seen in ‘Los Angeles Times’ Exit Polls *PS: Political Science and Politics* Vol. 35, No. 1 (Mar., 2002), pp. 67

<sup>91</sup> Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall and David H. Tabb “Protest Is Not Enough: A Theory of Political Incorporation” *PS*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Summer, 1986), pp. 576 , <http://www.jstor.org/stable/419179>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

that Browning, Marshall, and Tabb argued that increased representation of a minority group at any government level in these cities, such as city councils, could not bring the policy benefits they sought if they did not form a partnership with the dominant group in the city- whites.<sup>93</sup> The model ultimately suggests that minorities cannot have political success if they do not convince the majority of people, minorities and the majority, that they share the same interests.

The study design placed a higher value on political success that involved multi-racial coalitions involving whites than if minorities had succeeded on their own.<sup>94</sup> The reasons for doing so involve the notion that minorities, by definition, do not comprise a large enough portion of the electorate to ensure that their policy or representational victories last so as to have a profound effect over time. The Fraga-Ramirez model differs in that it seems to provide a guide for measuring Latino political incorporation regardless of whether they form political partnerships or not. By contrast, the Browning-Marshall-Tabb model acknowledges that a minority political victory has less of a profound effect if it does not include these partnerships. Basically, the Fraga-Ramirez model values Latino political power in terms of the ability to form a demanding, unified presence in the electorate that can produce legislators who enact policies of significant consequence to Latino interests, while the Browning-Marshall-Tabb model places emphasis on who supported them along the way.

Both models offer a better understanding of how to go about qualifying Latino political power in California. They suggest that in order to give a firm concluding observation on what kind of political power Latinos have in California today, we must examine the following topics;

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

the history and development of Latino political activism in California from its first pivotal moment to the present, the ascendance of Latino political influence in the major California institutions, the relationship between Latinos and their political allies, the potency of key policy victories for Latinos, and the role of socioeconomics in political incorporation. Along the way, we shall examine the factors that make the development of Latino political power unique, such as the immigration issue and ideological divisions within the Latino population. A comprehensive analysis of all of these topics will hopefully lead us to a conclusion that gives insight into the future of Latinos in California politics.

## **Chapter 1: A Brief History of Latino Political Power in California**

California's history has intertwined with that of Latinos' since its days as a territory of the Spanish empire and part of Mexico's northern frontier. Latinos maintained an important presence during the formation of California's earliest governmental and political institutions that reflected both their social and economic realities. From the earliest days of statehood, throughout the early civil rights protests of the 1960's, and into the present day, Latinos have constantly fought for a voice in California politics. An examination of the history of Latinos in California not only provides the necessary context for discussion, but also leads to greater insight into understanding their political incorporation. This chapter shall trace the major political and social developments in the history of California's Latino population as a means of establishing a guiding context. By doing so, I hope not only to identify the importance of key events in Latino history, but to also review the accomplishments of important Latino figures, discuss political victories and setbacks, and characterize major facets of Latino politics.

During the Spanish rule and Mexican Republican period of California, Latino political power dynamics evolved in such a way that regionalization became the norm. Dr. David Hayes-Bautista, a scholar of Latino cultural history, observes that "Latinos governed California from 1769 until statehood in 1850. They had run its economy, forged its culture, and established its cities."<sup>95</sup> With the settlement of Spanish presidios, missions, and pueblos, there began a process of *mestizaje* whereby a new creed of individuals known as *meztizos*, the offspring of Spaniards and indigenous peoples, forged new communities that would serve as the basis for Latino

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<sup>95</sup> Hayes-Bautista, David E.. *Nueva California : Latinos in the Golden State*. Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press, 2004. p 16. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/claremont/Doc?id=10068583&ppg=41> Copyright © 2004. University of California Press pg 16

society.<sup>96</sup> California's colonial society always had a heterogeneous population, as Spaniards, mulattos, and indigenous colonists from Mexico (then New Spain) migrated north to take advantage of possible agricultural and proprietary opportunities.<sup>97</sup> Spaniards native to the Iberian Peninsula and criollos groups (Spaniards born in the colonies), along with military officers and Franciscans, exercised most of the political, economic, and social control in the region, despite the majority presence of mixed blood groups.<sup>98</sup> California's relative isolation as New Spain's northern frontier, contributed to the development of "regional parochialism" in which colonists "identified far more with their provinces than with central Mexico or Spain."<sup>99</sup> As noted by Chicano scholar Albert Camarillo, "these regional identities were reinforced during the subsequent Mexican Republican period."<sup>100</sup>

With the declaration of Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, the California territory underwent systemic social changes that would lead to a new political structure. The central Mexican government had implemented the secularization of missions established under Spanish rule, which led to an increase in their sale as independent land grants to indigenous communities and other secular individuals. The formation of these properties into livestock and agricultural ventures led to the "golden age of ranchos" in which the political influence of

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<sup>96</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California- A History of Mexican Americans in California-*, (Sacramento; Boyd and Fraser, 1990). pg 2

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, pg 3.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

Franciscan priests declined.<sup>101</sup> This competition for property inevitably resulted in an increase of competition for political power.

Mexican republicanism thus began an era of provincial and autonomous local politics where regional self-government overcame any serious movement for a unified Californian structure. Mexico's federal Constitution of 1824 facilitated the expansion of self-government principles in the territory and thus local municipalities came to be governed by *ayuntamientos*, or town councils, which also contained provincial legislatures containing elected officials.<sup>102</sup> While some viewed this as an opportunity for Latino or *meztizo* political advancement, republicanism eventually gave way to political instability. Issues such as separation of church and state, rivalries between provinces, and disputes over the administration of secularized mission landholdings created political tension that showed class differences.<sup>103</sup> Those who inherited land grants from the Mexican government became the elite of Californian society in both the pueblos and ranchos, as they amassed enough wealth and social capital to affect local politics<sup>104</sup> Most of these individuals pertained to the meztizo groups which at this point in time, 1840 to 1850, made up only about 10 percent of the non-indigenous population, or 6,000 individuals.<sup>105</sup> The indigenous population itself continued to live on the margins of society, often living in small villages as servants for wealthy families or returning to isolation in the depths of the frontier.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, pg 6

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, pg 6

<sup>103</sup> Ibid pg 7

<sup>104</sup> Bid pg 7

<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

California under the Mexican Republic evidently possessed social divisions based on race, culture and wealth, but the intimate setting of provincial organization also “promoted social unity.”<sup>107</sup> Soldiers and civilians received land grants for services rendered to the Mexican Republic, and as such were able to establish a pastoral and pueblo-related economy based on both manual and skilled labor.<sup>108</sup> As a result, increased economic opportunities and a plethora of available properties kept any large-scale political and social crises from occurring in the period before the Mexican-American War. Latinos in the pre-statehood period of California thus enjoyed a relatively comfortable economic and political stability based on principles of autonomy and opportunity. The coming of the Bear Flag Revolt though and the ensuing war would greatly change the circumstances for Latinos.

In 1845, James K. Polk, an expansionist-minded, proslavery Democrat, became President of the United States. The acquisition of California and New Mexico became his administration’s top foreign policy objective, and so he committed to obtaining them either by treaty purchase, popular revolt against the Mexican government-based on the Texas model- or military conquest.<sup>109</sup> But the Mexican California population at the time showed no interest in revolt against the Mexican government, to the frustration of the Polk administration, which then began considering how to start a war with Mexico.<sup>110</sup> In June of 1846, U.S. Army explorer John C. Frémont and a band of American settlers had made their way into California and initiated a

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid pg 8

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Herman Belz, “Popular Sovereignty, The Right of Revolution, and California Statehood,” *The California Republic*, pg 5. (Rowman and Littlefield; New York, 2004)

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, pg 6.

military resistance against Mexico known as the Bear Flag Revolt.<sup>111</sup> The settlers, collectively known as the Bear Flaggers, vehemently applied the principles of the Declaration of Independence and social contract theory to their situation.<sup>112</sup> For them, the state of nature and war in which they lived in Mexican California, justified revolution. The United States declared war against Mexico in May of 1846 after the Thornton affair, in which Mexican forces attacked an American fort built on disputed Mexican soil.<sup>113</sup> Mexico's eventual surrender in January of 1847 after several crushing defeats at the hands of General Stephen Kearny's and Zachary Taylor's regiments, led to the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.<sup>114</sup> The treaty, signed on February 2, 1848, not only formally ended the war but also provided for the annexation of California and other territories by the United States.<sup>115</sup> Although the Mexican population in California, estimated at around 6,000, had the option under the conditions of the treaty to relocate to Mexico or become U.S. citizens, the gold rush in 1848 changed the social and political order of the state.<sup>116</sup> About 8,000 Mexican miners moved to California to take advantage of the gold finds, but over 100,000 "forty-niners" and American settlers also moved into the territory, transforming Latinos into the state's minority. More Americans would follow the miners into the newly acquired territory while over 10,000 Mexicans and native Californians

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Drew VandeCreek, "The Mexican-American War: Origins," *Northern Illinois University Library Digitization Project*, <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/mexicanwar/origins.html>.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> "The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo: Primary Documents of American History," *The Library of Congress Virtual Programs and Services*, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Guadalupe.html>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, pg 11

fled back to Mexico, fearing violence from opportunistic settlers. The California Constitution of 1849 would reflect these changing social dynamics.

In the fall of 1849, a 48 member convention consisting of Californians of various professions, ethnicities, and national origins, met in Monterey to draft and deliberate California's first constitution. While the convention contained only 8 individuals of Latino or Hispanic descent, the 1849 Constitution distinguished itself by its tolerance of the Latino presence in the state. In addition to establishing the basic governmental structure and civil rights of the new state, the 1849 California Constitution honored its obligations under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to grant suffrage to Mexican males.<sup>117</sup> The convention granted the right to vote to every white male citizen of the United States and as well as every white Mexican male who elected to become a U.S. citizen.<sup>118</sup> It excluded African-Americans and individuals of African descent from the suffrage rights but the Legislature did receive the ability to extend the vote to Native Americans.<sup>119</sup> Despite these exclusionary provisions, scholars saw the drafting of the 1849 Constitution as civil in nature. The 1849 convention "provided interpreters for the Spanish-speaking delegates, translated all resolutions into Spanish, and alternated the daily prayer between a Protestant minister... and a Roman Catholic Priest." That the convention had the

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<sup>117</sup> Gordon Lloyd "The Creation of the 1849 California Constitution," *The California Republic*, pg 48. (Rowman and Littlefield; New York, 2004)

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*.

original debates published in English and in Spanish “reflected the distribution of the population between native Californians and immigrant Americans.”<sup>120</sup>

The delicate balance of civility at the institutional level did not hold for long, as by the early 1860’s the Anglo American population matched that of Latinos. Between 1846 and 1860, the Mexican population in Los Angeles dropped from 96 percent to 47 percent. In Santa Barbara, the Mexican population dropped from 66 percent to 27 percent between 1860 and 1880, in Santa Cruz from 21.4percent to 10.3 percent, and in San Jose from 19.8 percent to 6.1 percent.<sup>121</sup> Racial tensions had been high throughout the state during the early 1850’s as a result of violence during the Gold Rush, but by the 1860’s they escalated in major population centers such as Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, where acts of violence by both Mexican American and Anglo American groups led to bitter political and public discourse.<sup>122</sup> In 1851, a new California land law challenged the validity of Spanish and Mexican land grants, which eventually led to the reexamination of over 14 million acres of land belonging to Latino individuals. Because the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo did not clearly enough explain the property rights of Mexicans under American governance, most Mexicans in the north had lost their lands to Anglo American proprietors in less than a decade.<sup>123</sup> The decrease of Latino social and economic capital became apparent in the 1879 California Constitutional Convention.

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<sup>120</sup> Gordon Lloyd, “The Creation of the 1849 California Constitution,” *The California Republic*, pg 55. (Rowman and Littlefield; New York, 2004)

<sup>121</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California- A History of Mexican Americans in California-*, (Sacramento; Boyd and Fraser, 1990). pg 20.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, pg 15

Politics scholar Gordon Lloyd writes that “the refounding of 1879 constitutionalized the politics of class and race, and was less inclusive and liberal than the first.”<sup>124</sup> The absence of native Californians at the convention, establishment of English as the official language for all official writings, and increased restrictions on the voting rights of males of any color, all contributed to the marginalization of ethnic minorities in politics.<sup>125</sup> The members of the 1879 refounding “were in fact closer to ordinary politicians than they were remarkable lawgivers; they turned the ‘organic law’ into a legal code... in addition to constitutionalizing class conflict.”<sup>126</sup> Latinos took on inferior positions at the social level in addition to their eventual segregation into neighborhood clusters or *barrios* at the outskirts of cities unfriendly to their presence.<sup>127</sup> Thousands of Latino males switched from pastoral occupations to manual and unskilled labor, leading to a statewide relegation of Latinos to the lowest rungs of society. While Latinos became victims of poverty and poor educational opportunities, the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of Latinos forming community organizations as the minority. Several barrios would form *mutualistas*, or mutual aid societies, as a means of facilitating charitable donations of food and money across communities.<sup>128</sup> The *mutualistas* led to the creation of new social, political, and cultural organizations, such as San Francisco’s Spanish American Independent Political Club, which supported the nomination of Spanish-speaking

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<sup>124</sup> Gordon Lloyd “The Creation of the 1849 California Constitution,” *The California Republic*, (Rowman and Littlefield; New York, 2004) pg 55.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 57

<sup>127</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California- A History of Mexican Americans in California-*, (Sacramento; Boyd and Fraser, 1990). pg 21

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

candidates for election to public offices.<sup>129</sup> The sprouting of over two-dozen Spanish-language newspapers between 1870 and 1910 helped Latinos maintain their ethnic pride and social bonds.<sup>130</sup> California's transition from Mexican territory to statehood in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thus resulted in a reversal of political and economic fortunes for Latinos, which would set the conditions for their political hardships in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These trials laid the groundwork for the community groups that would later on give rise to Latino political action groups.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 and a need for agricultural laborers both catalyzed the immigration of nearly a tenth of the entire population of Mexico into the United States. Estimates put the number of California's total share of the U.S. immigrant population at the time at around 30 percent, a 100 percent increase from previous years.<sup>131</sup> As such, the Latino barrios grew in size and number, many with their own unique qualities, but all characterized by segregation and poverty. The exploitation of many Latino rural and manual laborers during the first 20 years of the 20th century prompted the *mutualistas* to form the first umbrella labor union of Mexican workers, known as the Confederation of Mexican Labor Unions (CUOM in Spanish).<sup>132</sup> Despite fear of deportation, Mexican laborers took part in several union strikes throughout this time period, such as in the 1903 Japanese-Mexican Labor Union strike in Oxnard, the Electric Railway Strike of 1903, and the 1928 Cantaloupe strike by the Union of Imperial Valley

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 41-46.

Workers.<sup>133</sup> Nonetheless, Mexicans and Latin American immigrants alike continued to hold positions in the lowest rung of society where they were characterized as the “Mexican Problem.” Statewide “Americanization” programs and immigration quotas set by Congress in the 1920s sought to limit the presence of Mexicans in the United States, but the economic downturn during the Great Depression led to an eventual decrease in Mexican immigration.<sup>134</sup>

By the 1930’s, widespread anti-immigrant rhetoric institutionalized the perception that Mexicans and other Latinos took American jobs. The U.S. Department of Labor and President Hoover spearheaded massive deportations of Spanish-speaking individuals, regardless of citizenship, where between 1931 and 1933 over 400,000 Latinos were repatriated.<sup>135</sup> In response, the growing national labor unions provided Latinos with new opportunities to organize politically on a large scale.<sup>136</sup> Despite massive deportations, 1930 census reports indicated that since 1910, Latinos still doubled their share of the total state population to 6.5 percent.<sup>137</sup> Latino community organizers and union activists decided to take advantage of the fabric of existing Latino grassroots organizations, such as the mutual aid societies that began in the 1890’s, to form larger, interconnected political groups. Luisa Moreno, a Guatemalan native who had resided in Mexico and New York as a laborer, emerged as a critical figure for California’s Latinos. Before moving to California, Moreno served as a leader of the Congress of Industrial

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 58

<sup>137</sup> “California Census: 1930,” United States Census Bureau,  
<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/10612963v3p1ch03.pdf>

Organizations (CIO), and used her union clout to form the first national meetings of the Congress of Spanish Speaking People (CSSP) held in Los Angeles in 1939.<sup>138</sup> The CSSP successfully attracted Latinos of all descent, such as Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Chicanos. Over 1500 attended, including students, educators, and workers, in addition to lieutenant governor Ellis Patterson, emissaries from Mexico, and representatives from other major national labor unions.<sup>139</sup> The CSSP held deliberations for adequate housing, health care, work opportunities, education, and women's rights. "As the first national civil rights organization for Chicanos and other Spanish-speaking groups, the 'Congreso' represented a significant achievement and foreshadowed similar Chicano organizations of the 1960's and 1970's."<sup>140</sup> The Congress though, failed to translate its resolutions into legislation because of its lack of influence or clout with elected officials, a lesson that later Latino organizations would keep in mind. The CSSP faced further difficulties when the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the Federal Bureau of Investigation publically opposed its "radical labor" activism, which resulted in even more public opposition from the news media. The onset of World War II, which took much of its young male audience, and lack of funds, eventually undid the CSSP.<sup>141</sup> Despite these setbacks, the pre-WWII political activity of many Latino communities in California confirmed that Latinos possessed political organization abilities and that they would build a tradition of coalescing grassroots community, political, and labor organizations to achieve articulated political goals.

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<sup>138</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California- A History of Mexican Americans in California-*, (Sacramento; Boyd and Fraser, 1990), pg 61

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, pg 63

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

The 1940's would pose additional obstacles to Latinos in California. The indictment of 17 Chicano youth in a murder case in Los Angeles in 1942 represented for many, further persecution of the Latino community. A temporarily reinvigorated CSSP and the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America unions formed the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee to provide legal assistance to the alleged criminals. Eventually, the Court of Appeal of the State of California reversed the convictions in 1944 when it declared a mistrial due to the racial bias of the presiding Judge in the case.<sup>142</sup> The Latino community in Los Angeles had achieved a significant political victory.<sup>143</sup> Racial tensions still remained high, though, and the 1943 Los Angeles Zoot Suit Riots produced more sadness and frustration for Latinos who "struggled to keep family and neighborhood from moral and physical deterioration."<sup>144</sup> But with the end of WWII, the Latino community rejoiced over the victory of the United States and the contributions of distinguished Latino servicemen. While victory came at a deep cost to the nation in general, Latinos had taken on disproportionately heavy casualties in comparison with their share of the total population.<sup>145</sup>

In the aftermath of the war, Latinos found new economic opportunities in the United States with the establishment of the Braceros Program- a temporary worker program- which allowed contracted immigrant workers to reside in the United States as a means of addressing the extensive labor shortages in agriculture. During the 1940's, over 150,000 Latino immigrants worked in the United States and an additional 400,000 made their way into the country as the

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, pg 66

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, pg 68

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 72.

federal government decided to extend the lucrative program until 1964. Latinos continued to participate, despite egregious workplace exploitations.<sup>146</sup> Many other resident Latinos gained a “new sense of hope” with the increase in job opportunities during the war in industry, skilled trades, and labor unions<sup>147</sup>. Returning veterans also took advantage of the job and education benefits available to them from the G.I. Bill and a small Latino middle class began to emerge in major cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. While whites still received the majority of these new economic opportunities, Latinos used their newfound enthusiasm to form new political organizations, such as veterans groups. In Los Angeles, several potent reform organizations such as the Unity Leagues and the Community Service Organization emerged after the war. These groups were instrumental in significant Latino political victories such as the mobilization of Latino voters in Chino, CA, where Latinos comprised 40 percent of the population, into a voting bloc that elected the first Mexican American, Andrew Morales, to the City Council in 1946.<sup>148</sup> This galvanized the Unity Leagues into organizing another political victory in 1947 with the election of Edward Roybal to the Los Angeles City Council, which marked the first time a Latino had served on the council since 1881. By 1950, these reform groups would register an additional 32,000 voters in Los Angeles.<sup>149</sup> Former State Senator and California Democratic

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 75

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

Party Chairman Art Torres commented that Roybal's election "really led to the basic undercurrent of the development of organized skills for political empowerment" for Latinos.<sup>150</sup>

The next pivotal moment for Latino political power in California came during the turbulent 1960's. The Vietnam War, the antiwar movement, the civil rights movement, race riots, and student protests at university campuses all captured the attention of mainstream America. These issues brought traditional American values and social institutions into question in such a way that groups of all political persuasions, classes, and ethnicity began exchanging and criticizing each other's convictions at an unprecedented level. In particular, the national media often portrayed California as "the center for national agitation" where progressive ideas and conservative traditions clashed.<sup>151</sup> As Dr. Bautista notes "The 1960's were the crucible producing changes which unquestionably altered the character of Latino society in California." The change-oriented ideologies and pre-World War II organizational structure of Latinos had grown enough to successfully coalesce into a larger, more consequential force known as "the Chicano movement."<sup>152</sup> From 1965 to 1975, the "heyday" of the early Chicano movement consisted of several important exploits by Latino community leaders and activists, such as that of César Chávez and the United Farm Workers; Corky Gonzalez's Crusade for Justice; the Raza Unida Party which sought to bring Latino troops home from Vietnam, and the student strikes at

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<sup>150</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, interview by author, 1 February 2011, Claremont, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont.

<sup>151</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California*-pg 85

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

multiple college and university campuses around California to demand courses in Chicano studies.<sup>153</sup>

At the core of the movement lay the increasing size of the Latino population. Post-World War II population spikes as a result of increased Latino migration from the Braceros Program and baby boom account for much of these increases. Between 1940 and 1960, the Spanish surname population increased from 6 percent to 9 percent of the state's population. While initial census reports from the 1960's did not distinguish between Latinos and whites in their data, more recent reports indicate that the actual Latino population in California rose to 9 percent, accurately reflecting the surname population increases.<sup>154</sup> The general population increases in the state facilitated the construction of new public schools at the community college, state college, and University of California levels as spelled out in the California Master Plan for Higher Education. Latinos had little-to-no access to these institutions, as fewer than 25 percent of Latino adults had graduated from high school and only 3 percent had graduated from college by 1960. Even though their community did not have a history of educational attainment, many Latino youth yearned to earn an education.<sup>155</sup> The education issue represented the wider desire for Latinos to have access to the same job, social, and political opportunities as whites. The creation of the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) in 1960 marked the beginning of statewide Chicano and Latino campaigns to influence the policies of the two major political parties, especially that of

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<sup>153</sup> David Bautista, "Nueva California," . <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/claremont/Doc?id=10068583&ppg=41>, pg 45

<sup>154</sup> Guerra, Fernando J. "Emergence of Ethnic Office Holders." *Racial and Ethnic Politics in California* (IGS: Berkeley, 1991). Pg 120.

<sup>155</sup> David Bautista, "Nueva California," . <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/claremont/Doc?id=10068583&ppg=41>, pg 40

the Democratic Party<sup>156</sup> MAPA organizers started over ninety local chapters throughout the state which directly involved themselves in electoral politics by sponsoring candidates, registering voters, informing Latino communities about important issues, and lobbying for legislation of interest to Latinos. The political and organizational networks that MAPA established had a large impact in the election of two Latinos to the state Assembly in 1962, Phil Soto and John Moreno. The MAPA groups represented not only the grassroots characteristics of the traditional community organizations, such as the mutual aid societies, but also the headstrong nature of former barrio self-help and legal defense groups.<sup>157</sup>

MAPA's founding members, Bert Corona, Edward Quevedo Sr., Edward Roybal, and Manuel Ruiz, Jr, began a new practice of gathering new recruits to introduce into California politics. Several of the younger members that MAPA's leadership recruited later on received appointments or won elections to government positions at the local at state levels. Others went on to establish major organizations in the Latino community such as the National Council of La Raza and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund in 1968, along with the Association of Mexican American Educators in 1965.<sup>158</sup> MAPA's success represented the newfound political strength of Latinos in urban areas, but what some scholars consider the "single most important development in heightening the ethnic consciousness" of Latinos in California to a national audience, started in rural areas with the farm workers' movement led by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta<sup>159</sup>. Chávez and Huerta had worked together before as activists

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<sup>156</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California*, 87-88.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

in the Community Service Organization which fought for workers rights protections.<sup>160</sup> In 1965, their exploits as leaders of the United Farm Workers union (UFW) earned them national attention during a grape boycott. César Chávez, with his personable leadership qualities and non-violent tactics, attracted the attention of mainstream America enough to the point where the UFW began receiving financial resources from the major labor unions.<sup>161</sup> The UFW's efforts soon took up the popular title of "La Causa" (The Cause) as a rallying point for all farm workers interested in social justice.<sup>162</sup> As "La Causa" gained momentum, Chávez and the UFW won the union's first contract with the Schenley Corporation in 1966.<sup>163</sup> By 1967, the UFW merged with AFL-CIO and by 1970, achieved another major political victory with the signing of several union contracts with 26 different agricultural employers, after yet another long boycott.<sup>164</sup> By 1975, Chavez's organization scored a significant institutional victory when in cooperation with Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., they successfully pushed for the enactment of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board.<sup>165</sup> Chávez's and the UFW's success in bringing Latino issues into the national spotlight testified to what Art Torres describes as his ability to "turn a union into a movement."<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, pg 89

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid,

<sup>166</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, interview by author, 1 February 2011, Claremont, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont.

While the Latino political activity of the 1960's distinguished itself from that of any other previous decade, Dr. Bautista still comments that during this time, Latinos still "existed in the public consciousness as simply another political group pushing for its civil rights."<sup>167</sup> But even in this respect, Latinos in California still began what would become a new approach to amassing political power- not just grassroots organizing through labor unions and communities, but political action through legislative and institutional channels. The changing demographics of California, coupled with new cultural changes ushered in by momentum of reforms in the 1960's would "propel California into the multicultural twenty-first century."<sup>168</sup>

Between 1970 and 1980, the Latino population of California would increase from 11.9 percent to 19.2 percent- an increase of almost 2.3 million people.<sup>169</sup> Nearly one in four Latinos at the beginning of 1970 emigrated from Latin America, while native Latino birth rates skyrocketed.<sup>170</sup> The major political institutions in the state thus began formulating strategies on how to attract this growing constituency.

Latinos began a new, healthy incorporation into state politics when in 1961, newly-elected Speaker of the Assembly Jesse Unruh sought to maintain the newly won majorities of his fellow Democrats in state offices. His strategy entailed strengthening the Democratic Party by strengthening incumbents, and thus adopted the strategy of professionalizing the Legislature.

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<sup>167</sup> David Bautista, "Nueva California," . <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/claremont/Doc?id=10068583&ppg=41>, pg 57

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Guerra, Fernando J. "Emergence of Ethnic Office Holders." *Racial and Ethnic Politics in California* (IGS: Berkeley, 1991). Pg 120.

<sup>170</sup> David Bautista, "Nueva California," . <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/claremont/Doc?id=10068583&ppg=41>, pg 93.

With the adoption of Proposition 1A by voters in 1966, members of the state Legislature had new resources and staff at their disposal to help them in their political endeavors. Minority inclusion in the Legislature “would eventually be a by-product of this larger strategy” of consolidation of power, as the salary increases made serving as a lawmaker more affordable for minority candidates. This encouraged minorities to seek legislative positions in the Democratic-controlled Legislature, thus improving alliances between mainstream political parties and minority leaders.<sup>171</sup> While reapportionment, increased political awareness in minority communities, and more educated minorities working on legislative staffs increased Latinos institutional access to the Legislature, it was the professionalization that “helped break down the formerly white ‘gentlemen’s club’ atmosphere.”<sup>172</sup>

In Los Angeles, for example, significant recruitment efforts revolved around Richard Alatorre, an Assemblyman elected in 1972 and later City Councilman, and Art Torres, elected to the Assembly in 1974 and later to the state Senate. As Fernando Guerra notes, both of their victories relied not only on “the support they received from officeholders to whom they were aides, but to the expansion of the Latino political region.”<sup>173</sup> Not only Latino registration rates jump from 38 percent in 1974 to 54 percent by 1980, but both of the positions they won were vacated by the retirement of white incumbents who “understood the changing ethnic nature of their districts, reapportionment, or both.”<sup>174</sup> Latino activists capitalized on these political

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<sup>171</sup> Guerra, Fernando J. “Emergence of Ethnic Office Holders.” *Racial and Ethnic Politics in California* (IGS: Berkeley, 1991). Pg 127.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

opportunities by promoting the election of Latino candidates in newly vacated seats.<sup>175</sup>

Reapportionment in 1974, coupled with institutional reforms to engage Latinos in the 1960's, distinguished the 1970's as a decade for improved minority access to government.

The 1980's marked additional strides in Latino representation in government. Again, demographic changes contributed to political advancements, as the Latino share of the state population increased from 19.4 percent in 1980 to roughly 25 percent in 1990.<sup>176</sup> The registration rates among voting-age Latinos went from 54 percent in 1980 to an all-time high of 61 percent in 1984.<sup>177</sup> Between 1980 and 1990 Latinos were elected to an additional seven offices at county, city, or state levels.<sup>178</sup> The establishment of institutionalized recruitment networks became a major factor in the increasing political presence of Latinos during this time. 1982 became an important year for the development of Latino recruitment networks for public office. Because of his support of Speaker Willie Brown in the speakership battle of 1980, Richard Alatorre received the chairmanship of Assembly Committee on Reapportionment.<sup>179</sup> The 1982 election would be the first after a major reapportionment organized by Richard Alatorre, and with his influence, he ensured that two new Latino congressional districts were drawn and that the three state Senate and

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<sup>175</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, interview by author, 1 February 2011, Claremont, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont.

<sup>176</sup> California Department of Finance  
<http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/view.php#objCollapsiblePanelEstimatesAnchor>

<sup>177</sup> Belinda Reyes et. al, "A Portrait of Race and Ethnicity in California," *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 172 and pg 8, [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_201BRR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_201BRR.pdf).

<sup>178</sup> Guerra, Fernando J. "Emergence of Ethnic Office Holders." *Racial and Ethnic Politics in California* (IGS: Berkeley, 1991). pg 123

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

four Assembly positions that were held by Latinos remained secure.<sup>180</sup> While Latinos in Los Angeles had electoral success prior to the establishment of these coalitions of “candidate organizations,” no Latino officeholder won an election in the 1980’s without support from a network.<sup>181</sup> The networks provided “the necessary resources required to run an effective modern campaign” such as professional staff, campaign contributions, and campaign workers loyal to the network’s candidate. Interestingly enough, the networks proved effective enough to make ethnic candidates competitive in districts “that were becoming ethnic but had not yet completed the transition.”<sup>182</sup> As such, the cooperation of Latino officeholders with mainstream political forces at the state level served as an investment into political loyalties and coalitions that would improve Latino representation later on.

The 1990’s proved to be the decade of largest consequence for Latino political incorporation in the present day. While early 1990’s Latino voter registration and population levels stayed constant, the biggest changes came in 1994 with the Proposition 187 campaign. Following post-Cold War spending cuts and a statewide economic recession in 1994, many Californians began to complain about the burden they felt illegal immigrants placed on the state’s resources. As such, voters approved Proposition 187, which sought to eliminate various social services, such as public education and nonemergency medical care, to undocumented immigrants.<sup>183</sup> But the language of the measure, along with campaign ads decrying the continued

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid, pg 129-130

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>183</sup> Adrian D. Pantoja and Gary M. Segura, “Fear and Loathing in California: Contextual Threat and Political Sophistication among Latino Voters,” *Political Behavior* Vol. 25, No. 3 (Sep., 2003), pp. 266  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3657321>

immigration of Latinos to California, created an onerous tone that infuriated the Latino community.<sup>184</sup> Latinos felt that they had born the brunt of majority animosity long enough.

Senator Torres labels this particular moment “the tipping point for Latino political involvement.” Latinos viewed Proposition 187’s intentions to limit social services to illegal immigrants as an “attack on Latino human rights” by Governor Pete Wilson, who adopted the Proposition as part of his mantra for reelection.<sup>185</sup> Senator Torres said the following regarding the Latino and Democratic response to Proposition 187:

“ In 1996 when I took over the Democratic Party I made it a point to have registered voters and volunteers at every swearing in ceremony to bring in Latinos and other minorities who wanted to become Democrats, and a lot of them were also Asian voters, Vietnamese especially, reacting against 187 because they were impacted by that initiative... it was brought forward by Pete Wilson because at that point he was 23 points behind Kathleen Brown and if it were not for him taking on 187 and it becoming his mantra, I don’t think he could have won the governorship. So after ’94 it became more apparent, because all of a sudden these people, who did not want to become U.S. citizens, became U.S. citizens and registered Democrat, and all of a sudden the numbers started to increase.”<sup>186</sup>

As such, Latinos mobilized around the Proposition 187 and the immigrant rights issue. The percentage of eligible Latinos registered to vote in the State jumped 15 percent between 1990 and 1996, from 52 percent to 67 percent.<sup>187</sup> This event had even longer lasting ramifications, as exit polls indicate that Latinos have gone from comprising roughly 7 percent of

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<sup>184</sup> Commissioner Gabino Aguirre of California, phone interview by author, 7 April 2011, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>185</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, interview by author, 1 February 2011, Claremont, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Luis Ricardo Fraga and Ricardo Ramirez, “Latino Political Incorporation in California, 1990-2000,” *Latinos and Public Policy: An Agenda for Opportunity*, (Berkeley; Berkeley Press, 2003) pg 309.

the California electorate in 1992 to 23 percent in 2008.<sup>188</sup> Latinos would continue to work as an ethnic voting bloc to ensure popular defense of their interests. Of 11 statewide races for president, U.S Senator, and governor from 1990-2000, the racial and ethnic vote was the margin of victory in seven races while the Latino vote alone was the margin of victory in three.<sup>189</sup> Unprecedented levels of Latino representation in the state government quickly followed the increases in registration and naturalization trends. The percentage of Latinos serving in the state Legislature grew from 6 percent to 18 percent between 1990 and 2002.<sup>190</sup> By 1996, Cruz Bustamante, originally elected in 1993, became the first Latino Speaker of the Assembly.

In just under a decade, Latinos in California had quickly gone from a group still learning the workings of an institutionalized recruitment process in the 1980's to becoming a resounding voice in California politics. Decades of organizing at local and statewide levels, along with eventual proficiency in political coalition-building in the later part of the century, ensured that Latinos would thoroughly respond to an organized attack on their community. After nearly a century of marginalization and inability to command sufficient clout in mainstream politics, Latinos in California now possessed the resources to profoundly address their political interests.

The election of 53 new Latino officials to the state Legislature between 1990 and 2010 illustrates the potency of the Latino political presence in California. Since 1990, Latinos Cruz Bustamante, Antonio Villaraigosa, Fabian Nuñez, and John Pérez, have become Speaker of the

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<sup>188</sup> Fraga and Ramirez, "Latino Political Incorporation," pg 309 and "Hispanics in the 2008 Election: California," from *Pew Hispanic Center*, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/vote2008/California.pdf>

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, pg 303

<sup>190</sup> "Latino Legislative Member Directory," California Latino Legislative Caucus website and author's calculations, <http://www2.legislature.ca.gov/LatinoCaucus/MemberDirectory.asp>

Assembly.<sup>191</sup> In the Senate, many Latino senators, such as Gloria Romero, and Jenny Oropeza, have received committee chairmanships.<sup>192</sup> As such, Latinos have not only grasped opportunities to improve their representation in state government, but have also demonstrated their ability to lead in statewide contests and issues, not just “Latino issues.” Registration among eligible Latino voters has remained steady at 63 percent, with total state population at an all-time high of 37 percent.<sup>193</sup> In the 2010 midterm elections, Latinos made up 22 percent of the state electorate, compared with 18 percent in 2008 and 12 percent in 2006.<sup>194</sup> According to the Sacramento Bee, Attorney General Jerry Brown captured the governorship with 64 percent of the Latino vote, while his Republican opponent Meg Whitman won only 30 percent.<sup>195</sup> In terms of party affiliation and unity, over 60 percent of Latinos have consistently identified with the Democratic Party since 1990, with 65 percent of Latinos voting Democratic in 2010.<sup>196</sup>

That Latinos have come from living as a suppressed minority of Californian society, to becoming major actors in the political and institutional workings of the state, says a great deal about the importance of unity in minority group advancement. Having examined the major

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> California Political Almanac 2007-2008, *CQ Press Online Editions*, <http://library.cqpress.com.ezproxy.libraries.claremont.edu/cpa/toc.php?source=California+Political+Almanac+2007-2008&mode=cpa-toc&level=3&values=Ch.+6+-+The+Legislature~Senate%2C+A-Z>

<sup>193</sup> Census CPS, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/Table%2004b.xls>, Census quick facts, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>

<sup>194</sup> Jack Chang, “Latino Vote Helps Dems Keep California Domination,” *The Sacramento Bee*, November 6, 2010, <http://www.sacbee.com/2010/11/06/3165639/latino-vote-helps-dems-keep-california.html>.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Fraga and Ramirez “Latino Political Incorporation,” pg 313 and “Just the Facts: Latino Likely Voters in California,” *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 1 [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_LatinoVotersJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_LatinoVotersJTF.pdf)

turning points and figures in Latino political history in California, the following conclusions can be at least partially drawn. For Latinos, population size has played an essential role in communicating political interests, but success has come from forging alliances with majority groups with considerable power. That Latinos had their most significant political victories after forming coalitions with national labor organizations and major party leaders, demonstrates that minority groups need assistance from the majority in order to succeed politically.

But these conclusions raise further questions. If Latinos have become part of the majority party in California, do they still fight for Latino issues? Do Latino issues then become California issues? Also, as we shall see, Latinos vary in ideology, even though they overwhelmingly vote Democrat. Examining the ideological basis for variation of political thought within the Latino community may provide insight as to what a unified Latino political platform, if it exists, will look like in the future. We know what Latinos have accomplished on a macro level in terms of electoral gains, but what have they accomplished in terms of their legislative interests? That Latinos now possess considerable influence in state offices and California politics in general, will reveal more about the motivations behind the Latino legislative agenda.

## **Chapter 2: Latino Policy Benefit and Institutionalization**

California's Latinos have consistently struggled to incorporate themselves into the major political institutions of the state. As mentioned previously, Latinos made unprecedented strides in legislative representation after the passage of Proposition 187 in 1994. As former State Senator and California Democratic Party Chairman Art Torres notes, the Proposition 187 campaign became the "tipping point for Latino political involvement."<sup>197</sup> To Senator Torres, the anti-Latino undertones of the measure suggested that "those who were in power had no concerns about fundamental human rights for Latinos."<sup>198</sup> Political scientists Luis Fraga and Ricardo Ramirez assert that the increased importance of Latinos as residents, voters, and elected officials, has produced "the most significant change in the politics of California" since 1990.<sup>199</sup> Now that Latinos have acquired new political clout, the question remains: what have they done with it? How have they used their new numbers in the state Legislature to influence policies and bring change to their communities?

Evaluating Latino policy institutionalization helps gauge the scope and effects of Latino political incorporation on a state-wide level.<sup>200</sup> To understand how Latino political power has changed and grown, we must examine how much success Latinos have had in articulating a specific set of policy goals, whether or not they have met these goals, the impact of enacted

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<sup>197</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, phone interview by author, 1 February 2011, Claremont, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Luis Ricardo Fraga and Ricardo Ramirez, "Latino Political Incorporation in California, 1990-2000," *Latinos and Public Policy: An Agenda for Opportunity*, (Berkeley; Berkeley Press, 2003), pg 301.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, pg 306

policies, and ultimately, the “staying power” of said policies<sup>201</sup> By doing so, we can see how increased Latino political incorporation has benefited Latinos and translated into meaningful changes for their material well-being.

Assessing Latino policy success means understanding who speaks for Latinos on a state-wide level and outlines their policy goals. Obviously, the Latino community in California itself determines what matters to it most, but knowing who constructs the platform helps. At a macro level, interest groups and elected officials, by design, channel the opinions of the Latino community into actual policy actions. Raquel Donoso, Executive Director of the Latino Community Foundation, which develops philanthropic activity to support the well-being and empowerment of Latino communities throughout California, has experienced the leadership dynamic between Latino interest groups and elected officials since 1994. In Director Donoso’s opinion, Latino interest groups exist to understand the challenges facing Latino communities so that they can collaborate with other groups and influence policies in the state Legislature.<sup>202</sup> But even then, Director Donoso notes that a “huge void” currently exists in the interest group lobbying operation for Latinos.<sup>203</sup> While national organizations such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) do consistently address Latino concerns with results, their national focus detracts from greater success in Sacramento.<sup>204</sup> The Greenlining Institute, which originally focused only fighting

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Executive Director Raquel Donoso of the Latino Community Foundation, phone interview by author, 7 March 2011, Claremont, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

redlining practices harmful to minority communities, now addresses issues such as Latino voter rights and access, but still does not fully represent the Latino voice.<sup>205</sup> As in the past, labor unions have had the most success in organizing California's Latinos and representing them in Sacramento.<sup>206</sup> Unions such as the United Farm Workers and Service Employees International Union have more notably galvanized Latino representation in rallies and other public events than any other group in the present.<sup>207</sup> But even then, Director Donoso does not believe that one leader or figurehead speaks for the Latino community or builds their political platform.<sup>208</sup>

Senator Torres speaks similarly of this issue. In his view, while figures such as César Chávez have helped to build movements, no one leader exists, and "there never should."<sup>209</sup> Latinos vary widely in political ideologies and preferences, because of their regionalization in California and varying occupations.<sup>210</sup> Latinos find it difficult to organize on one issue because they are "a large complex group" that does not have as long of a history of being politically active, or influential, as they are in the present.<sup>211</sup> Politicians and activists agree that finding a figure, or group of figures, that can form the various Latino voices into one articulated platform, will take some time and might not, or should not, be viable at all.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Senator Arthur Torres, phone interview by Author.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Executive Director Raquel Donoso, phone interview by Author.

But since 1994, Latinos office holders and voters have consistently fought for a core set of issues. Juan Torres, current Aide to the Senate Rules Committee and former Chief of Staff for the late Latino Legislative Caucus Chair, Marco Antonio Firebaugh, remarks that Latino politicians and voters have fought hardest on four issues; education, immigration, health care, and affordable housing.<sup>212</sup> While solidarity among Latino office holders and voters varies among these issues, if Latinos experience signs of improvement in their material well being as a result of policies enacted in said issues, then it serves as evidence of their greater political incorporation.<sup>213</sup> Similarly, these policies do not necessarily need to be targeted specifically at Latinos, but if they meaningfully address their concerns, then they can be at least partially attributed to their increased legislative influence. With this in mind, we shall review several key legislative victories for Latinos addressing each of these issues and analyze whether said victories translated into meaningful improvements for them.

## **Education**

Latino legislators have focused most of their efforts on education policy to providing access to an affordable and effective college education for all residents, while also improving the English-learner programs that help many Latinos along the way.<sup>214</sup> Since 2000, increased funding for the Cal Grant program has proved a major priority for Latino office holders.<sup>215</sup> On September 11, 2000, Senate Bill 1644, the Ortiz-Pacheco-Poochigan-Vasconcellos Cal Grant

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<sup>212</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author, 18 March 2011, Claremont, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>213</sup> Luis Ricardo Fraga and Ricardo Ramirez, "Latino Political Incorporation in California, pg 306.

<sup>214</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

Act, established a new two-tiered approach to the Cal Grant program that would increase access. The program now offers both an entitlement grant to eligible graduating high school seniors and transfer students, and a competitive grant award for students who do not qualify for the former.<sup>216</sup> The average recipients for the new competitive program had a family income of roughly \$14,600 to \$21,500 per year and lived in large households where the parents had little-to-no educational attainment.<sup>217</sup>

The new program directly addressed the income and educational reality of many Latinos. In 1999, the median income of Latino households was among the lowest among the identified ethnic groups (only higher than those who identified as “other”) at \$35,000 per year.<sup>218</sup> The median income for the state was \$47,400 dollars per year, while it was \$36,532 per year for Latinos, and adjusted for inflation, this number had gone down 1.6 percent from 1989.<sup>219</sup> Latinos also tied Blacks and Native Americans in making up the second largest percentage of the total poverty rate in the state at 22 percent, higher only than “other” at 24 percent.<sup>220</sup> In terms of educational enrollment, a total of roughly 600,000 Latinos over age 15 were enrolled in public or private colleges, only 26 percent of the state total.<sup>221</sup> Also, Latinos had the greatest disparity between K-12 enrollment and college enrollment of any other ethnic group in the state, 45

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<sup>216</sup> “Competitive Cal Grant Program 2005-2008” *California Student Aid Commission*, Pg 1. [http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt\\_frm/2005-2008CompetitiveCalGrantReport.pdf](http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/2005-2008CompetitiveCalGrantReport.pdf)

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid* pg 15-22.

<sup>218</sup> “Census 2000: An Overview of Californians,” *California Department of Finance*, pg 67. [http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/2000\\_SF3\\_CA.pdf](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/2000_SF3_CA.pdf)

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, pg 98.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, Pg 48.

percent for K-12 and just 26 percent for college.<sup>222</sup> Furthermore, Latinos made up only 5.2 percent of all persons age 25 plus with a bachelor's degree, the second lowest of all the ethnic groups in the state.<sup>223</sup>

By 2009, the situation had improved for many Latinos. Census Current Population Surveys report that Latinos now comprise 12.1 percent of all individuals over 25 with a bachelor's degree, a roughly 7 percent increase from 1999-2000 levels.<sup>224</sup> Latinos did also experience some increases in their material well-being after the efforts to improve Latino college attainment. The mean Latino family income jumped from roughly \$43,000 in 2000 to \$58,284 in 2008 to 2009.<sup>225</sup> While these improvements may not be tied to increased Cal Grant program funding alone, increased funding for education, a key focus of Latino politicians, increased from 39 billion in 2000 to 49 billion in 2010.<sup>226</sup> Overall, education increased from 49 percent of all general fund expenditures in 2000 to 54 percent in 2010.<sup>227</sup> While continued funding with education evidently had a possible correlation with the ultimate goal of educational attainment and income increases, major victories came in increase to access for undocumented immigrants.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, pg 52.

<sup>224</sup> "Current Population Survey: California Two-Year Average Series-March 2000-2009," pg 8.

[http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/CPS\\_Multi-Year\\_3-09.pdf](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/CPS_Multi-Year_3-09.pdf)

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, pg 13.

<sup>226</sup> "Chart E- All Education as a Percentage of General Fund Expenditures," *California Department of Finance*, pg 2-3, [http://www.dof.ca.gov/budgeting/budget\\_faqs/documents/CHART-E.pdf](http://www.dof.ca.gov/budgeting/budget_faqs/documents/CHART-E.pdf).

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

By 2000, undocumented immigrants constituted roughly 7 percent of California's total population, the majority of them from Latin American countries.<sup>228</sup> In October of 2001, Governor Gray Davis approved AB 540, authored by Assemblyman Marco Antonio Firebaugh, which allowed for undocumented immigrants to pay the in-state tuition for college.<sup>229</sup> While the legislation only allowed for long-term residents who attended high school in California the exemption from higher out-of-state tuition charges, it did have a positive impact. Qualified applicants could only receive the exemption for California community colleges and four-year state schools, but the graduation rates for non-resident aliens from California State universities more-than doubled after 2000.<sup>230</sup> Latino graduation rates from any California State university doubled as well after 2001.<sup>231</sup> The California Community College enrollment rates among Latinos also grew, from 25 percent of all enrolled students in 2000 to 30 percent in 2009.<sup>232</sup> As the state Legislature has continued the AB 540 program, about \$100 million in tuition waivers for non-resident applicants have been granted annually since its inception.<sup>233</sup> The success of the AB 540 program in increasing access to an affordable education for Latinos is part of the reason

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<sup>228</sup> Hans Johnson, "Just the Facts: Illegal Immigrants," *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 1-2. [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_IllegalImmigrantsJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_IllegalImmigrantsJTF.pdf)

<sup>229</sup> "AB 540 Assembly Bill-History" *Official California Legislative Information*, [http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/01-02/bill/asm/ab\\_0501-0550/ab\\_540\\_bill\\_20011013\\_history.html](http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/01-02/bill/asm/ab_0501-0550/ab_540_bill_20011013_history.html).

<sup>230</sup> "Statistical Brief on Graduation Rates for CSU-Full Time, First-Time Freshmen by Gender and Ethnicity," *California State University Analytic Studies*, pg 48. [http://www.asd.calstate.edu/gradrates/grad\\_rates\\_ethnicity.pdf](http://www.asd.calstate.edu/gradrates/grad_rates_ethnicity.pdf)

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, pg 31.

<sup>232</sup> "Student Headcount by Ethnicity," *California Community Colleges-Statewide Demographics by Year*, <http://www.cccco.edu/ChancellorsOffice/Divisions/TechResearchInfo/MIS/DataMartandReports/tabid/282/Default.aspx>

<sup>233</sup> "Status of Tuition Waivers for Undocumented Students," *California Legislative Analyst's Office*, Pg 1. [http://www.lao.ca.gov/sections/higher\\_ed/FAQs/Higher\\_Education\\_Issue\\_17.pdf](http://www.lao.ca.gov/sections/higher_ed/FAQs/Higher_Education_Issue_17.pdf)

why it became one of the Latino Legislative Caucus's most significant political victories on education.<sup>234</sup>

Despite these gains, Latinos still face great challenges in increasing their educational attainment and enrollment rates to a level that reflects their share of the state's population. The nation-wide economic recession that started in 2008, coupled with legislative gridlocks on the state budget, have severely hindered proactive efforts similar to AB 540. Either way, increased enrollment and graduation rates indicate that Latinos, as Director Donoso states "are better off now than they were in the past."

## **Immigration**

Latino legislators have consistently focused on the immigration issue as a centerpiece of their policy efforts. That Proposition 187, a measure focusing on undocumented immigrants, became an issue for all Latinos in the state, attests to the importance of defending immigrant rights and improving immigrant livelihoods in the eyes of Latino politicians. Equally important, immigrant issues became Latino issues as well, because of the presence of immigrants in the Latino community. Since 1994, the newly elected Latino legislators focused on defending the Latino and immigrant community from measures harmful to their interests such as Proposition 187. Juan Torres notes that a peculiar policy dynamic exists among Latino legislators concerning the immigration issue, in that during times of economic malaise, these legislators have often had to "play defense" on immigrant rights, while times of economic growth have allowed for more proactive policy action.<sup>235</sup> The biggest transformation, in Juan Torres's opinion, has occurred

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<sup>234</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author.

<sup>235</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author

with the unprecedented representation of Latinos in the state Legislature. During the 1990's, Latino legislators faced difficulty in combating anti-immigrant policies, but since the early 2000's, they have had the votes not only to strike down such measures, but propose "more aggressive bills." that actively promote immigrant quality of life<sup>236</sup> In relation to these more proactive policies, Latino legislators have formulated a stronger solidarity on the issues of increased educational opportunities for immigrants, English language learner materials, and driver's license for undocumented immigrants.<sup>237</sup> Examining specific policy victories and shortcomings in immigration reform and opportunity measures will provide further insight into the ability of Latino legislators to translate influence into change for Latino communities. Also, as some Latino legislators also consider naturalization of Latin American immigrants in California a priority, analysis of naturalization rates over the past 10 years shall prove insightful as well.<sup>238</sup>

AB 540 remains the Latino's primary victory on expanded education access for undocumented immigrants. Within this issue though, lies the reality that Latino legislators can only do so much for undocumented immigrants on the state level, as immigration reform remains primarily a federal issue. The Dream Act (S. 3992) introduced into the United States Senate in 2010, which would have expanded work opportunities for undocumented college graduates, became the primary immigration reform goal at the time for Latinos.<sup>239</sup> Despite the bill's unprecedented progress through both Congressional chambers, Democrats in the Senate could

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

not muster the votes to prevent a filibuster.<sup>240</sup> Even though the opportunity to achieve significant reform fell through, and may not occur again in the near future, Latino legislators have resorted to a strategy of addressing immigrant concerns through a variety of state-level reforms.<sup>241</sup> The overall strategy has two parts- one of proposing consequential legislation for immigrants, and one of striking down legislation with anti-immigrant undertones.<sup>242</sup>

For this reason, Latino legislators have consistently worked towards enacting policies pertaining to English language learner programs. But the history of bilingual education reforms in the state suggests that success has not come easily. Currently, English language learners make up 25 percent of the state's K-12 students, while 85 percent of these students speak Spanish as their primary language.<sup>243</sup> California's initial bilingual education policies evolved within the federal framework of the federal Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, which provided federal funding to states for bilingual education programs.<sup>244</sup> AB 1329, the Chacon-Moscone Bicultural Education Act of 1976, required that California school districts offer bilingual education to any student identified as an English learner, which was then followed by The Bilingual Teacher Training Assistance Program of 1981 that provided funding for bilingual credential candidates working toward this endeavor.<sup>245</sup> But Sacramento Superior Court rulings led to an overhaul of measures such as these that protected bilingual education, and subsequently

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Shelley de Alth, Christopher Jepsen, "English Learners in California Schools," *The Public Policy Institute of California*. [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_405CJR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_405CJR.pdf)

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, Pg 17.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

stated that native-language instruction was no longer required.<sup>246</sup> These conditions set the stage for the passage of the Proposition 227 initiative in 1998, the “most controversial policy affecting English-learner students.”<sup>247</sup> Proposition 227 changed bilingual education in California by requiring that English-learner instruction “be delivered ‘overwhelmingly in English’” after structured immersion programs, while implementing generally more rigorous English learning standards.<sup>248</sup> In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 tied Title III federal funding for English-learner and immigrant instruction to improvements in English proficiency rates.<sup>249</sup> As a result, Latino legislators who gained new influence after 1994 would face new challenges in addressing the immigrant education issue, but several policy victories attested to their solidarity in doing so.

The enactment of the English Language Acquisition Program (AB 1116) in 1999 facilitated English proficiency of students in grades 4-8 by helping them meet state academic content and performance standards. Under the provisions of this program, school districts receive \$100 per English-learner student in these grades for supplemental programs such as summer school, intersession, special materials, and tutors.<sup>250</sup> The law, authored by Latinos legislators Denise Ducheny and Richard Alarcon, allowed for districts to receive an additional \$53 million in funding in 2002, which has been estimated to have reached around 90 percent of eligible

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid, pg 33.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, pg 21.

English-learner students.<sup>251</sup> The inception of the English Language and Intensive Literacy Program in 2000 also provided for additional language and literary classes for English-learner students in all grades. After receiving an allocation of \$250 million over three years, districts were able to apply for up to \$400 per student for up to 120 hours of instruction.<sup>252</sup>

While these new policies have supported districts in helping English-learner and immigrant students in meeting new proficiency standards, the Economic Impact Aid (EIA) Program has provided additional significant funding. For over 30 years, EIA has provided funding “for compensatory educational services to low-performing and English-learner students.”<sup>253</sup> Even after Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger won the recall election in 2003, Latino Democrats still managed to allocate \$499 million dollars to EIA, 85 percent of which went directly to English-learners.<sup>254</sup> English-learners and immigrant students have continued to benefit from this program, as the 2010 to 2011 state budget provided for an additional \$934 million in funding.<sup>255</sup> But while overall funding and legislative support for English-learners and immigrants has grown profoundly over the past few years, results are less than optimal.

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> “Schedule of EIA Entitlement Data,” *California Department of Education*, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r14/documents/eia10ent.xls>

Even with the consistent infusion of funding into these assistance programs, and some improvement over the past 10 years, Spanish-speaking Latino students have still had some of the lowest California English Language Development Test scores of any other ethnic group as of 2010.<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, Latino legislators have had significant policy failures in this area, such as the vetoing of AB 2585 in 2000, which would have provided millions of dollars in funding for instructional materials for English-language learners.<sup>257</sup> With respect to other immigration issues, mainly putting immigrants on a path to citizenship while affording them essential privileges along the way, Latino legislators have had less success. Because the immigration issue remains a federal affair over which the states have little power, Latino legislators cannot technically provide the widespread, thorough reforms that immigrant Latinos desire. For example, Latino legislators have been unable to secure the right for undocumented immigrants to possess driver's licenses, an issue which Senator Gil Cedillo and other Latino politicians rallied around.<sup>258</sup> It seems as though Latino politicians have had success in using their influence to address immigrant issues, but have been unsuccessful in solving them. The complexity of the issue also fractures the unity of some Latino legislators on certain aspects of immigration reform. For example, while many viewed Senator Gil Cedillo as one of the most vocal legislative leader for immigrant concerns during his tenure, other legislators, such as Assemblyman Juan Arambula,

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<sup>256</sup>“California English Language Development Test,” *California Department of Education: Assessment, Accountability, and Awards Division*,” <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CELDT/results.aspx?year=2009-2010&level=state&assessment=3&subgroup=8&entity=>

<sup>257</sup> “AB 2585 Assembly Bill History,” *Official California Legislative Information* , [http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/99-00/bill/asm/ab\\_2551-2600/ab\\_2585\\_bill\\_20000922\\_history.html](http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/99-00/bill/asm/ab_2551-2600/ab_2585_bill_20000922_history.html)

<sup>258</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author

who represented the more conservative Fresno County, kept their support more hidden from the public eye, and in many cases split with other Latinos on immigrant issues.<sup>259</sup>

Because some interest group leaders consider naturalization rates among Latino immigrants residing in California an indicator of improvements in Latino material well-being, we shall observe how they have fluctuated over time.<sup>260</sup> The U.S. Department of Homeland Security reports that for fiscal year 1998, roughly 68,000 individuals residing in California from five selected Latin American countries (Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico) successfully completed the naturalization process.<sup>261</sup> By 2003, this number had dropped to 41, 266 individuals from 43 different Latin American countries<sup>262</sup> Most recently, naturalization rates for Latino immigrants in California rose to 71, 800 individuals for fiscal year 2009<sup>263</sup> This fluctuation in recent years coincides with major political and social events in California. While the relatively higher rates of naturalization in 1998 compared with the year 2003 would suggest that many Latino immigrants began the naturalization process after the pressures of the Proposition 187 controversy, it does not account for the sudden drop just five years later. Post 2001 naturalization rates for the state may have a correlation to tougher immigration and border security measures enacted after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but their

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Executive Director Raquel Donoso, phone interview by Author.

<sup>261</sup> “Persons Naturalized By Selected Country of Birth and State of Residence: Fiscal Year 1998,” *DHS Fiscal Year 1998 Statistical Yearbook*, <http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk98Na.shtm>

<sup>262</sup> “Persons naturalized by state of residence: fiscal years 1986-2003” *DHS Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2003*, <http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk03Na.shtm>

<sup>263</sup> “Persons Naturalized by State or Territory of Residence and Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Year 2009,” *DHS Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2009*, <http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk09Na.shtm>

sudden drop also does not suggest a long-term, institutional change in naturalization processes as the rates sharply changed again by 2009. Juan Torres comments of the immigration process, that internal changes within immigration and naturalization agencies make naturalization rates a completely haphazard and unpredictable phenomenon.<sup>264</sup> Either way, while increases in Latin American immigrant naturalization rates could be associated with greater, institutionalized, Latino policy influence within the state, their intermittent decrease suggests inconsistencies. As a result, success on this front for Latinos still very much depends on the abilities of federal agencies to streamline the processes and political consensus on the issue in Congress.<sup>265</sup>

The immigration issue then, by its complex and controversial nature, serves as an example of how Latino policy access has increased but not translated into successful, institutionalized results in all aspects. The mixture of failure and triumph for Latinos in this area proves that Latinos may need some more unity and time to sustainably progress on immigration.

## **Health Care**

Director Donoso notes that although naturalization and educational attainment rates are prime indicators of whether Latinos have improved socioeconomically, access to health insurance also possesses equal importance.<sup>266</sup> As such, Latino legislators have made more unified and successful advances in providing more opportunities to Latinos to affordable health insurance. Before 2000, less than 50 percent of Latino adults in California had health insurance,

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<sup>264</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author.

<sup>265</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

compared with over 70 percent of white adults.<sup>267</sup> Because a large portion of Latinos in the state were undocumented immigrants, they could not obtain health insurance through their employers or public programs and their children remained uninsured as well. Health insurance, as a primary indicator of access to health care services, often leads to improved health status, which has been a major concern for Latinos historically in the state.<sup>268</sup> The Federal Balanced Budget Act of 1997 had created the Children's Health Insurance Program, which provided federal funds to states on a matching basis to finance health care coverage for children in families with incomes less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.<sup>269</sup> As a result, legislators enacted the Healthy Families Program to implement this new federal insurance program for children. Assemblyman Antonio Villaraigosa, before his tenure as Speaker of the Assembly, authored AB 1126 which established the Healthy Families Program in 1997. The program, separate from Medi-Cal, began with \$6.9 billion in federal funds over ten years, generally on a 2-to-1 federal/state matching basis.<sup>270</sup> Legislators had to use the full funding capabilities of the program to help parents buy health insurance for their children, as the yearly case-load for the program increased every year.<sup>271</sup> Today, Latinos comprise more than 60 percent of the program's total beneficiaries, with over

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<sup>267</sup> Belinda Reyes et. al, "A Portrait of Race and Ethnicity in California," *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 74, [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_201BRR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_201BRR.pdf).

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> "Healthy Families Program: LAO Analysis of the 1998-99 Budget Bill," *Legislative Analyst's Office*, [http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis\\_1998/health\\_ss\\_crosscutting\\_anl98.html#\\_1\\_1](http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis_1998/health_ss_crosscutting_anl98.html#_1_1)

<sup>270</sup> "Health and Social Services," *Legislative Analyst's Office*, Pg C-10. [http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis\\_2006/health\\_ss/healthss\\_anl06.pdf#page=142](http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis_2006/health_ss/healthss_anl06.pdf#page=142)

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

750,000 individuals having enrolled in the program since 1998.<sup>272</sup> That the program allowed not just residents, but “qualified” immigrants to enroll as well, contributed to the strong consensus of Latino legislators to defend the program’s funding.<sup>273</sup>

Although Latino legislators sought continued financial stability for the Healthy Families Program, the 2008 economic recession forced legislators to impose cutbacks. The state’s Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board (MRMIB), which oversaw the program’s finances, considered establishing an enrollment cap and even the possible dismissal of children from the program during Fiscal Year 2008.<sup>274</sup> After the federal government reauthorized additional funding for another 2 years, the MRMIB avoided these austerity measures, but continued fiscal uncertainty poses problems for Latino enrollees in the future.<sup>275</sup> Either way, the program became a historical legislative success in addressing health problems among Latino children.

The Medi-Cal program has also consistently benefitted Latinos. Currently, Latinos make up roughly 55 percent of all Medi-Cal beneficiaries with undocumented immigrants comprising 11 percent of the total.<sup>276</sup> These percentages have stayed consistent since 2003, as continued funding for the program, one of the major health insurance providers for the state, has been a key

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<sup>272</sup> “Healthy Families Facts and Figures,” *The California Health Care Foundation*, Pg 8.  
<http://www.chcf.org/~media/Files/PDF/H/PDF%20HealthyFamiliesFactsAndFigures2006.pdf>

<sup>273</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author

<sup>274</sup> “SCHIP Funding and Authorizing,” *Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board*,  
<http://www.mrmib.ca.gov/MRMIB/SchipBackground.html>

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> “Medi-Cal Population Distribution by Ethnicity,” *California Department of Health Care Services*,  
[http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dataandstats/statistics/Documents/3\\_61\\_Population\\_Distribution\\_Ethnicity.pdf](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dataandstats/statistics/Documents/3_61_Population_Distribution_Ethnicity.pdf)

goal for legislators, even during economic crises.<sup>277</sup> Despite this, the number of uninsured individuals in the state remains high. Between 1987 and 2009, the segment of the non-elderly population covered by employer-based insurance declined from 65 percent to 52 percent.<sup>278</sup> Although Medicaid coverage partially offsets the decline, more than 20 percent of Californians remain uninsured.<sup>279</sup> As the unemployment level in the state rose from roughly 6 percent in 1995 to 12.1 percent in 2009, the total uninsured rate rose from 18 percent to 22.2 percent in the same period of time.<sup>280</sup> Now, Latinos comprise 61 percent of California's total uninsured population, the highest of any ethnic group.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, half of California's non-citizens do not have health insurance, the highest rate in the country.<sup>282</sup>

The health insurance issue then becomes similar to the immigration issue in terms of Latino policy success. While Latinos have been able to make significant gains in insuring formerly neglected segments of their communities, the problem is still too large in scale for a few legislative victories to result in the kind of comprehensive, long-term changes required. These victories though, could indicate improved political incorporation as they have benefited Latino material well-being over a significant period of time. Either way, Latinos have had a decisive impact on policy pertaining to health care.

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<sup>277</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author

<sup>278</sup> Paul Fronstin, "California's Uninsured," *California Health Care Almanac: The California Health Care Foundation*, <http://www.chcf.org/publications/2010/12/californias-uninsured>

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> "California Health Care Almanac: California's Uninsured," *The California Health Care Foundation*, Pg 20. <http://www.chcf.org/~media/Files/PDF/C/PDF%20CaliforniaUninsured2010.pdf>

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

## Affordable Housing

The preceding policy goals on educational attainment, immigration reform, and affordable health care access all point to Latino legislators' and interest group leaders' goal of improving the socioeconomic status of Latinos residing in the state. But according to Juan Torres, access to affordable housing and home ownership most readily signifies socioeconomic advancement for most Latinos.<sup>283</sup> While many Latino legislators agree that Latinos should have the opportunity to own a home, fractures in political solidarity appear more on this issue than any of the other core policy goals.<sup>284</sup> Largely due to the recent economic recession and collapse of the housing market, Latino legislators have taken different opinions on the integrity of the mortgage and bank loan processes in helping Latinos buy homes. While some more progressive Latino legislators decry the way that banks engaged in predatory lending and other abusive practices that contributed to the housing crisis, other moderate Latino legislators suggest improved cooperation with banking entities that can help Latinos achieve a central facet of the American dream.<sup>285</sup> Nonetheless, the state Legislature enacted policies geared towards addressing low homeownership rates among Latinos, while the electorate itself passed measures to assist low-to-moderate income families in buying property. Again, a result of the housing market collapsing, new housing policies enacted in the past 15 years made only short term gains.

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<sup>283</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by author

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

By early 2000, Latinos had one of the lowest median incomes of any ethnic group in the state and, as a result, comprised only 17 percent of all single-family home-owners in the state.<sup>286</sup> Latino Legislative Caucus Chairman Marco Antonio Firebaugh concentrated the Legislature's efforts on improving homeownership rates among all Californians by introducing AB 1170 in 2002, which would eventually go on to establish the Building Equity and Growth in Neighborhoods program (BEGIN). Enacted into law by September 2002, BEGIN sought to combine lowering of regulatory and permitting costs to increase the purchasing power of low and moderate income households, primarily through down payment assistance, to increase the homeownership rates in California.<sup>287</sup> By doing so, the program would build partnerships between local governments, counties, and housing developers to increase the supply of new, affordable homes for these target populations.<sup>288</sup> While local governments and counties would reduce regulations and permit requirements to encourage developers to create this new supply, BEGIN, through the state Department of Housing and Community Development, would provide grants to local governments to fund the down payment assistance programs.<sup>289</sup>

The program seemed to have an immediate effect in a growing housing market. The Public Policy Institute of California observed by 2005 that Latinos, although they still comprised a small share of homeowners, had accounted for almost 25 percent of all recent homeowners in

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<sup>286</sup> "California: Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics 2000," *U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey*, [http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=04000US06&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF4\\_U\\_DP4&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF4\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US06&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF4_U_DP4&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF4_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on)

<sup>287</sup> "2009 BEGIN Guidelines," *California Legislative Analyst's Office*, Pg 4. [http://www.hcd.ca.gov/fa/begin/2009\\_BEGIN\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/fa/begin/2009_BEGIN_Guidelines.pdf)

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

the preceding two years.<sup>290</sup> The home ownership rates among Latinos had increased from 43 percent in 2000 to 46 percent in 2003, the biggest gain among large ethnic groups in the state, but surprised many given that Latinos still generally had lower incomes.<sup>291</sup> While PPIC attributed part of the increase to Latinos being more likely to live in the Central Valley and less in more expensive parts of the state, such as the Bay Area and other coastal regions, home ownership rates in general were on the rise.<sup>292</sup>

By September 2008, PPIC observed dramatic rise in homeownership rates from 55 percent of all Californians in 1996 to 60 percent in 2005, which they mainly attributed to “low interest rates, creative financing, and buying in less expensive inland areas.”<sup>293</sup> These underlying facilitators in the nation-wide economic crash in 2008 would contribute to a complete reversal of fortune for Latinos. As home prices fell by an annualized rate of 20 percent for every quarter in 2008, homeownership rates starting declining dramatically, and California had the highest foreclosure levels in the country.<sup>294</sup>

It became apparent that the effects of not just the BEGIN program, but other policies, had given way to the crash.<sup>295</sup> Proposition 1C, which the electorate had approved in November of 2006, authorized the use of \$2.85 billion in general obligation bond funds for “various housing

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<sup>290</sup> Hans P. Johnson, “California’s Newest Homeowners: Affording the Unaffordable,” *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 8. [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/cacounts/CC\\_805HJCC.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/cacounts/CC_805HJCC.pdf)=

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> “Just the Facts: Housing in California,” *The Public Policy Institute of California*, [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_HousingJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_HousingJTF.pdf)

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

purposes,” while Proposition 46, enacted in 2002, had authorized \$2.1 billion for 21 housing programs, the largest housing bond ever approved in the state by that time.<sup>296</sup> Both propositions had sought to assist low and moderate income families with tapping into the then-growing housing market, but by 2008, only 48 percent of Latinos owned homes in comparison to 65 percent of whites.<sup>297</sup> Majorities of Latinos (55 percent) were still renters, as were immigrants.<sup>298</sup> By 2011, the budget proposed by Governor Jerry Brown to address a heavily indebted and economically feeble state included a “pause in issuance” of housing bonds under the BEGIN program. The great recession, as it did in every state, had completely undone all progress in increasing home ownership rates at that time, and any immediate improvement in socioeconomic status for Latinos.

## Conclusions

The types of policy issues that Latino legislators have focused on since amassing greater political influence says a great deal about the overarching goals of the Latino community in California. As mentioned previously, Latinos hold a difficult, low position on the socioeconomic ladder. For many of them, the ability to organize politically and incorporate themselves into the necessary political institutions signifies the belief that they can use government to affect change in their lives. For this reason, Latinos have mobilized politically in the name of two essential accomplishments: sustained political incorporation and presence in government, and ascension into the middle class. This is why Latino legislators continue to fight for policies that, although

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<sup>296</sup> “Implementation of the Housing Bond: Analysis of the 2007-2008 Budget Bill,” *California Legislative Analyst’s Office*, [http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis\\_2007/general\\_govt/gen\\_02\\_anl07.aspx](http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis_2007/general_govt/gen_02_anl07.aspx)

<sup>297</sup> “Just the Facts: Housing in California,” [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_HousingJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_HousingJTF.pdf)

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

imperfect and not always successful, address the most apparent indicators of social progress for Latinos. These goals reinforce one another, as the use of policy to create a more educated and economically sound Latino electorate can lead to continued political mobility, and vice versa.

The experience that the Latino community and Latino legislators have had with statewide policies reflects, to a certain degree, their actual political influence in the state. But that Latinos have had varying success with their major policy initiatives suggests that newfound electoral influence does not always translate into effective, long-lasting policy making. In analyzing Latino policy institutionalization, Latinos have without a doubt, gained greater opportunities and access to policy benefit. The increased presence of Latino legislators, within both the Senate and the Assembly, suggest that this should naturally result in greater influence on legislation, but this varies with the issue. With education, Latinos have been the most successful in transforming strength-in-numbers into a cohesive, unified message that has translated into long term benefits and changes for the Latino community. This probably relates directly to the ability of Latino legislators to frame the education issue not just as a Latino issue, but as a California issue. That education programs have received a continued increase in funds since the 1990's also highlights the extent to which Latino presence in the Democratic Party has translated into benefits for Latinos, as an increased support for public programs directly benefits a range of Latino constituents. This is similar for Latino goals on health care, as the newfound, overwhelming presence of Latinos in public health insurance program demonstrates the ability of Latino legislators to directly affect the material well being of impoverished communities through legislation. As it pertains to both education and health care, the increase in educational attainment, enrollment, and insurance rate increases among the Latino population suggest a greater degree of institutionalization than with immigration or housing.

The immigration and housing issues present unique challenges for Latinos because of their direct dependence on the stability and growth of the state economy. That Latinos must, as a community, defend themselves against anti-immigrant sentiment during recessions where their burden on state programs becomes more apparent, ultimately suggests that Latino legislators do not have high success on this issue given the scarce opportunities to proactively address it. While AB 540 has had tangible, longer lasting effects for immigrant Latino students, Latino immigrants as a whole will have to continue to wait for major federal reforms to truly address the issue of citizenship and naturalization. With housing, Latino legislators have only been able to go as far as the market allows them too. Directly legislating on socioeconomic improvements has shown that comprehensive change can also only come at opportune moments of continued market growth. On these issues it becomes more apparent that even increased solidarity as a voting bloc within both the electorate and the Legislature does not necessarily translate into strong enough of a political influence to thoroughly affect the major economic reality of Latinos. It shows that while some general measurements of policy incorporation can apply to certain issues, measuring success on issues where too many factors remain outside of legislative control may require more accommodated criteria to truly gauge the types of policy successes relative to their context. Also, efforts to change policy become less consequential when many Latino legislators begin fracturing on their viewpoints. This reiterates that policy unity is a necessary and important factor for consequential policy benefit.

More importantly, this raises the issue of how the absence of a thoroughly defined Latino political operation that is unified and clear in its policy goals affects the success of legislation that can truly help Latino communities. Latino interest groups, labor groups, and politicians do not agree on everything. Examining the dynamics of interest groups, politicians, and the voters

who make up the Latino political platform will reveal more about what we can expect Latino political power to look like in the future, and how this may one day allow Latinos to thoroughly impact all policy fields.

### **Chapter 3: The Dynamics and Context of the Latino Statewide Entity**

The ability of Latinos to form a sizeable voting bloc that can elect sympathetic candidates and influence policy depends greatly on their unity. While the actions of Latino interest group leaders and politicians suggests that Latinos do have the overarching goals of sustaining political influence and improving socioeconomic mobility, fractures do exist. But why? To restate Senator Art Torres's earlier point, "Latinos are not monolithic."<sup>299</sup> Disagreements among Latino legislators over significant policy issues such as community development or immigration demonstrate that at least at the top-end of the group, diversity of interest inhibits absolute consensus. That some Latino legislators exhibit a more vocal, unabashed approach to immigration reform, a hot-button issue for most Latinos in California, while others make their support less visible, attests to the role of group dynamics in policy success. The lack of perfect unity at the top though, has its roots in the varying opinions and priorities of California's growing Latino population. As such, this chapter shall examine the dynamic of the Latino electorate with respect to ideology, political affiliation, priorities, and composition. Analyzing these factors in both technical and practical terms will provide insight into the relationship between Latino voters, politicians and interest groups so that we can understand how it affects their policy success.

Examining the demographics of the Latino population will establish a helpful context. The population itself has grown dramatically over the past 40 years, with Latinos having comprised 15 percent of the total state population in 1974 to an all-time high of 37 percent in

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<sup>299</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, phone interview by author, 1 February 2011, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

2008.<sup>300</sup> The immigrant population of the state saw similar increases, as immigrants went from comprising just 5 percent of total state population in 1970 to 13 percent in 2006.<sup>301</sup> Currently, Latinos account for 56 percent of the immigrant population, with Mexico the leading country of origin.<sup>302</sup> That so many Latinos emigrate from developing nations might account for their having the lowest mean family income of any ethnic group; \$58,284 versus \$95,660 for Asians, \$67,588 for Blacks, and \$111,531 for whites.<sup>303</sup> Furthermore, Latinos also have the highest unemployment rate of any other ethnic group in the state; 8.2 percent for Latinos, 4.4 percent for whites, 3.3 percent for Asians, and 7.6 percent for blacks.<sup>304</sup> The grim economic reality reflects itself in Latinos' substandard educational attainment rates. Latinos comprise only 12.1 percent of all individuals over 25 with a bachelor's degree, and while this is a considerable increase from previous years, this still does not compare with the educational attainment of the other ethnic groups.<sup>305</sup> The relatively low educational success of the majority of the Latino population reflects itself in their opinions regarding higher education. The Public Policy Institute of California

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<sup>300</sup> Population Estimates from CA Dept. of Finance Demographic Research Unit- For 1970-1990 Data: "Revised Ethnic Population Estimates: July 1970 to July 1990." , For 1990-2000 Data- "E-3: California Race/Ethnic Population Estimates: Components of Change for California Counties, April 1990 to April 2000," For 2000-2009, "Current Population Survey: California Two-Year Average Series" all from <http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/view.php#objCollapsiblePanelEstimatesAnchor>

<sup>301</sup> Hans Johnson, "Just the Facts: Immigrants in California," [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_ImmigrantsJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_ImmigrantsJTF.pdf)

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> "Current Population Survey: California Two-Year Average Series," pg 12-13, [http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/CPS\\_Multi-Year\\_3-09.pdf](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/CPS_Multi-Year_3-09.pdf)

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, pg 10

<sup>305</sup> "Current Population Survey: California Two-Year Average Series," pg 13 [http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/CPS\\_Multi-Year\\_3-09.pdf](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/census-surveys/documents/CPS_Multi-Year_3-09.pdf)

reports that roughly 73 percent of Latinos perceive budget cuts in higher education as a major problem, only African Americans, at 84 percent, oppose these cuts more.<sup>306</sup>

These troubling economic and educational conditions for Latinos have drastic consequences on their health as well. Latinos currently comprise 61 percent of California's total uninsured population, the highest of any ethnic group.<sup>307</sup> Because of the historically substandard income and unemployment levels among Latinos, their portion of the most likely residents to stay uninsured dropped only slightly from 33 percent to 32 percent between 2000 and 2009.<sup>308</sup> Their dire health care situation reflects itself in their enrollment in public programs. Latinos make up more than 60 percent of all beneficiaries of the Healthy Families Program, which provides health insurance access to children in low-income households.<sup>309</sup> Latinos have also consistently relied upon the Medi-Cal program. Since 2003, Latinos have consistently comprised roughly 55 percent of all Medi-Cal beneficiaries, while undocumented immigrants have also comprised 11 percent of the total.<sup>310</sup> That Latinos face difficulty in affording decent health coverage demonstrates why only 31 percent of Latinos consider themselves healthy, the lowest of every ethnic group, compared to 58 percent of whites, 45 percent of Asians, and 38 percent of

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<sup>306</sup> Mark Baldassare, "PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and Higher Education," *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 7. [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/survey/S\\_1109MBS.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/survey/S_1109MBS.pdf)

<sup>307</sup> "California Health Care Almanac: California's Uninsured," *The California Health Care Foundation*, Pg 20. <http://www.chcf.org/~media/Files/PDF/C/PDF%20CaliforniaUninsured2010.pdf>

<sup>308</sup> Paul Fronstin, "California's Uninsured," *The California Health Care Foundation*, pg 20 <http://www.chcf.org/~media/Files/PDF/C/PDF%20CaliforniaUninsured2010.pdf>

<sup>309</sup> "Healthy Families Facts and Figures," *The California Health Care Foundation*, Pg 8. <http://www.chcf.org/~media/Files/PDF/H/PDF%20HealthyFamiliesFactsAndFigures2006.pdf>

<sup>310</sup> "Medi-Cal Population Distribution by Ethnicity," *California Department of Health Care Services*, [http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dataandstats/statistics/Documents/3\\_61\\_Population\\_Distribution\\_Ethnicity.pdf](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dataandstats/statistics/Documents/3_61_Population_Distribution_Ethnicity.pdf)

Blacks.<sup>311</sup> Overall, 33 percent of Latinos declare themselves “not too happy” with their quality of life, the highest of any ethnic group.<sup>312</sup>

Latinos have historically struggled to increase their material well-being, and while they have had significant gains over the past 20 years in doing so, they have not yet reached an acceptable level of socioeconomic stability. Latinos have obviously aligned themselves with the Democratic Party and labor unions as a means of gaining the kind of political influence necessary to use government as a tool to actively improve their situation. But while some would assume that these allegiances take root in Latinos possessing common liberal ideologies, Latino opinion actually varies.

65 percent of California’s Latino likely voters have currently registered with the Democratic Party, a 6 percent increase from 2006.<sup>313</sup> 18 percent currently identify with the Republican Party, and 14 percent declare themselves independents.<sup>314</sup> Even though Blacks identify with the Democratic Party more than any other ethnic group at 77 percent, the Democratic percentage of Latino voters is still high compared to white likely voters who split 43 percent for Republicans and 37 percent for Democrats.<sup>315</sup> With this in mind, one could argue that Latinos overwhelmingly possess liberal sensitivities. But polls show otherwise. Latinos identify themselves just as politically liberal (34 percent) as they do “middle-of-the-road” (33 percent) or

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<sup>311</sup> Mark Baldassare, “PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and Healthy Communities,” *The Public Policy Institute of California*, pg 4. [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/survey/S\\_211MBS.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/survey/S_211MBS.pdf)

<sup>312</sup> Ibid, pg 10

<sup>313</sup> “Just the Facts: Latino Likely Voters in California,” [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF\\_LatinoVotersJTF.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_LatinoVotersJTF.pdf)

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

conservative (33 percent). Compared to whites and Asians, who at 43 percent and 36 percent respectively, consider themselves conservative rather than liberal or moderate, this even distribution along ideological boundaries proves significant. But Latino likely voters still fall into socioeconomic circumstances similar to that of the general Latino population. Only 29 percent of Latino likely voters have graduated from college, the lowest among all ethnic groups.<sup>316</sup> 21 percent of Latino likely voters earn more than \$80,000, a relatively small amount compared to whites and Asians of which 49 percent and 47 percent respectively fall into this category. This suggests that although many Latinos fall into similar socioeconomic circumstances, and have similar policy stances, they remain equally open to a variety of ideological camps, more than any other ethnic group in California. This poses a challenge for Latino politicians and interest group leaders, who in these circumstances must consider the ideological heterogeneity of their base when it comes time to build consensus on difficult policy issues. At root of the obstacles towards long-term policy benefit for Latinos, lies their core, ideological differences on how to frame, address, and solve the issues that affect them all. With voter registration rates among eligible Latinos estimated to have grown from 38 percent in 1974 to 62 percent in 2008, and the increase in the Latino portion of the statewide electorate from 9 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 2008, knowing how to appeal to this diverse group matters that much more.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> From multiple sources: Belinda Reyes, "A Portrait of Race and Ethnicity in California," pg 172 and pg 8 [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_201BRR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_201BRR.pdf), Matt A. Barreto and Ricardo Ramírez, "Minority Participation and the California Recall: Latino, Black, and Asian Voting Trends, 1990-2003" *PS: Political Science and Politics* Vol. 37, No. 1 (Jan., 2004), pp. 11-14 Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4488753>, and Los Angeles Times California General Election Exit Polls found at <http://www.latimes.com/la-statsheetindex,0,440052.htmlstory>

In addressing this issue, one must address why Latinos, if so ideologically diverse, identify so heavily with the Democratic Party, Former State Senator and California Democratic Party Chairman Art Torres notes that the anti-immigrant sentiments manifested in Proposition 187 in 1994 signified the Republican Party's rejection of Latinos.<sup>318</sup> Former Service Employees International Union Board Member Rosie Martinez also notes of the time, that Latinos realized that they could not vote for "reactionaries who acted against their own interests" as they had for Ronald Reagan in the 1980s.<sup>319</sup> Moreover, by the 1980s, Latinos in California had already begun to build a strong presence within public sector unions, initially as a means of supporting workers rights and obtaining better job opportunities, but they decided to embed themselves just as strongly with the Democratic Party as other union members after Proposition 187.<sup>320</sup> For Senator Torres, the messages to communicate became clear: "we're not Pete Wilson" and "Republicans don't care about fundamental human rights for Latinos."<sup>321</sup> Republican Assemblymember Bonnie Garcia notes that she, as a Latina conservative of Puerto Rican origin, could win elections in her home district based on the issues and a genuine concern for Latino issues.<sup>322</sup> A major drawback for Republicans does not necessarily concern the fear that too many Latinos

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<sup>318</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, phone interview by author, 1 February 2011, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>319</sup> CA Service Employees International Union Board Member Rosie Martinez, phone interview by author, 4 Apr. 2011, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, phone interview by author, 1 February 2011, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>322</sup> Assemblymember Bonnie Garcia of California, phone interview by author, 23 February 2011, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA. 23 February 2011, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

identify as liberal, because just as many identify as conservative, but that the California Republican Party has not recently taken the same efforts to recruit and train Latino candidates as Democrats have.<sup>323</sup> As such, the Latino-Democrat alliance has persisted in recent memory due to both past shortcomings that Republicans have had little success in rectifying, and Democratic capitalization on Republican ostracizing of Latino voters.

Although Latinos have consistently supported Democratic causes since 1994, the Democratic-labor-Latino voter relationship that has made this possible still has its own faults. SEIU Board Member Rosie Martinez notes that union incorporation of Latinos, a major facet of contemporary Latino political influence, did not develop easily. Having originally joined SEIU, currently one of the largest and most politically influential labor unions in the state, as a nurse in the mid 1970s, Rosie Martinez witnessed the degree to which the union leadership struggled with fully adopting Latino membership. Many white and Black SEIU members originally felt threatened by the increasing Latino presence in public sector and manual labor positions throughout the union.<sup>324</sup> Moreover, many members resented Latinos for having “taken their jobs” and received extra pay for the utility of their bilingualism.<sup>325</sup> Despite these setbacks for Latinos, they had, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, acquired more prominent positions in the union leadership and grown as a percentage of total union membership.<sup>326</sup> In the present day, Latinos form the majority of some SEIU local branches’ membership and no traces of animosity,

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> CA Service Employees International Union Board Member Rosie Martinez, phone interview by author, 4 Apr. 2011, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

resentment, or racism exist among the leadership.<sup>327</sup> While some covert inhibitions may exist among select individuals in the union, general consensus exists that SEIU and other prominent labor unions have fully integrated Latinos into their ranks.<sup>328</sup>

But the union still fractures along the issue of immigration reform. For many members, the role of labor unions such as SEIU concerns the original principles of defending workers' rights, increasing job opportunities, and organizing laborers.<sup>329</sup> But now that labor unions have become the best organizers of Latinos in the state, they often find themselves at odds with each other over immigrant rights.<sup>330</sup> There exists a simple explanation. Many individuals who join the unions do so with just the intent of serving the aforementioned immediate interests as occupational laborers.<sup>331</sup> When it comes time for the union to take stances on more politically complex and sensitive issues such as immigration reform, membership and leadership begin to show differences in opinion. Many wish to stay committed just to the original functions of the union, while others wish to use the union's large membership and influence to address policies that affect many other members.<sup>332</sup> This fracture poses a challenge for the union itself that has ramifications on its relationship with other interest groups.

Latino advocacy groups such as California Rural Legal Assistance, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the United Farm Workers, and the National

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

Council of La Raza all actively address immigration reform, along with other controversial issues.<sup>333</sup> These groups have consistently fought on behalf of Latino communities and have tried to build considerable influence in Sacramento, but they face the difficult task of convincing the totality of union membership and leadership to commit to controversial reforms. While these differences do not, by any means, put labor unions at complete odds with Latino advocacy and interest groups, they do prevent the possibility of a unified Latino political operation. Raquel Donoso, Director of the Latino Community Foundation and prominent Latina activist, notes that for a truly cohesive Latino political operation to arise that can effectively serve all Latino ideological positions, train and recruit the right candidates, and enact policies, a unifying figure needs to emerge.<sup>334</sup> Ideological differences that exist between labor unions and other interest groups pose a larger problem for Democrats in terms of forming and maintaining a complete Latino political operation. For this reason, even though a clearly identified leader who could speak for Latinos' political interests and unite them would help, it is unlikely to happen. Because Latinos ideological and political interests depend greatly on their region or occupation, any person trying to bridge the gaps between them must have the ability to spread a wide-encompassing and effective message.<sup>335</sup>

Even though this rarely happens on a statewide level, some individuals have had more success than others. According to Director Donoso, current United States Secretary of Labor and

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<sup>333</sup> Executive Director Raquel Donoso of the Latino Community Foundation, phone interview by author, 7 March 2011, Claremont, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

former California Congressman Hilda Solis has great potential for filling this role.<sup>336</sup> With her extensive history fighting alongside labor unions and Latinos on workers rights and education issues, Secretary Solis has built important name-recognition among the electorate, politicians, and union leaders. While she has remained in the national spotlight for some time now, her loyalty to the necessary Latino political entities still remains strong, offering her continued political promise. Senator Art Torres also finds future potential in current State Senator Michael Rubio from Kern County.<sup>337</sup> The increasing Latino presence in the Central Valley provides an interesting staging area for Latino politicians, such as the 33-year-old Senator Rubio, to start forging the strong bonds between more conservative Latinos in agricultural occupations with the more traditionally liberal, unionized Latino voters.<sup>338</sup> That Senator Rubio received support not just from liberal or moderate Latinos, but also from the conservative, business-oriented presence in his district, attests to his broad appeal across the spectrum of Latino mindsets. His example could continue to provide guidance for what Latino candidates need to do in the future.

But within the ranks of the state Legislature, a few Latino politicians have had major success in leading the Latino policy agenda. As a former Chief of Staff to Latino Legislative Caucus Chair Senator Marco Antonio Firebaugh, Juan Torres notes that in fighting for the core Latino policy issues of immigration reform, education access, housing reform, and health care access, several Latino politicians made major strides. Historically, Senator Richard Polanco and

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, phone interview by author, 1 February 2011, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

former Speaker of the Assembly Antonio Villaraigosa spearheaded important policy successes such as the Healthy Families Program and citizenship education programs for undocumented immigrants.<sup>339</sup> Currently, Speaker of the Assembly John Perez and Senate Rules Committee Chairman Kevin De Leon possess great influence in formulating such policies.<sup>340</sup> At the same time, Senator Alex Padilla and Assembly Appropriations Committee Chairman Felipe Fuentes have had continued success in building policy consensus between members in both the Senate and the Assembly.<sup>341</sup> Current Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina and Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny, also a former Chair of the Assembly Budget Committee, were also instrumental in keeping policy goals alive during trying times for the Latino Legislative Caucus<sup>342</sup>

While all of these policy leaders, and organizational experts such as Secretary Solis and Senator Rubio, have shown the ability to further incorporate Latinos into California's political system, no one leader can emerge to form an absolute message or policy platform for all them. But this only attests to the robust, democratic nature of Latino politics. Senator Art Torres, an important figure in Latino politics himself, believes that no one leader or individual should speak for all Latinos in California.<sup>343</sup> Latinos, like any other ethnic group, have their own opinions and predispositions on a range of issues. That Latinos in California have strongly aligned themselves

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<sup>339</sup> Senate Rules Committee Aide Juan Torres, phone interview by Author, 18 March 2011, Claremont, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Senator Arthur Torres of California, phone interview by author, 1 February 2011, tape recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

with a few political entities over the past 20 years does not mean that they all act or vote uniformly. The ideology of likely Latino voters in the state suggests that the Republican Party, as Senator Torres suggests, has the duty of moderating their views to attract more Latinos so as to ensure that Latinos can truly vote on their issues and opinions, and not just because one party accepts them more than the other.<sup>344</sup> For this reason, Senator Torres believes that “it’s the political parties that have a responsibility to reach out to various voting blocs in California and attend to their needs, not the other way around.”<sup>345</sup> Even then, Latino politicians, if they truly intend to serve the interests of their constituencies, do not have the role of speaking and acting for Latinos. Dr. Gabino Aguirre, former Mayor of Santa Paula and current Commissioner on the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, believes that leaders need to be grounded in their communities in order to serve as representatives, not spokespeople.<sup>346</sup> Factionalism rises out of individuals who believe that they can take charge of all Latino interests, which leads to infighting rather than progress.<sup>347</sup> In these instances, Latino politicians “really should not become ego-involved in themselves as leaders, because ‘absolute power corrupts absolutely’.”<sup>348</sup> As such, the relationship between Latino interest groups, politicians, labor unions, and voters reflect that Latinos in California have a healthy diversity of opinion, and while having one streamlined operation would make their actions more efficient, it would be undemocratic.

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Commissioner Gabino Aguirre of California, phone interview by author, 7 April 2011, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

Having examined the overall group dynamic of Latino voters and the politicians and interest groups that represent them, we know that Latinos now have more powerful allies and resources at their side. As previously discussed, the size and variety of the groups involved in Latino policy concerns can function both as an asset and, occasionally, as a hindrance when attempting to agree on the issues. But in discussing the kind of power Latinos have come to possess in California, we cannot ignore certain institutional changes that have helped them along the way. More specifically, changes in redistricting practices and voting rights measures have allowed Latino voters and politicians to move upward through the political ranks, and eventually gain notable influence in the Legislature. Latino political power obviously starts with voting, but the changing nature of their electoral strength over the years has increased the power of their vote. With this in mind, I will discuss particular redistricting practices and realities that have allowed Latinos increased incorporation and whether new developments will help or hurt them politically.

J. Morgan Kousser notes in *The New Political Geography of California* that “Since the beginning of minority ethnic politics in the United States, most famously with the massive Irish immigration to America in the 1940’s and ‘50s, emerging minority ethnic groups have most preferred candidates from their own ethnic group.”<sup>349</sup> Latinos provided further examples of this in the 1990s with their consistent election of Latino candidates in state legislative districts.<sup>350</sup> The Voting Rights Act of 1965, with its amendments, and term limits, contributed to the advent of Latino politicians in that it protected them from vote dilution by harmful redistricting

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<sup>349</sup> J. Morgan Kousser, “Has California Gone Colorblind?” *The New Political Geography of California* pg 269, (Berkeley; IGS Press, 2008).

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

practices. As such, we shall examine how these developments contributed to Latino voting power since the 1990s.

Since the inception of the Voting Rights Act and one person, one vote court cases in the sixties, redistricting not just in California, but across the country, had to become “more precise, open, and fair in treatment of historically disadvantaged minority groups.”<sup>351</sup> The addition of Section 5 to the Voting Rights act required “jurisdictions with a history of racial discrimination and low minority voter participation to pre-clear all proposed changes in voting laws or procedures” with the Department of Justice.<sup>352</sup> But Latinos benefitted from a specific provision of the amendment that allowed for the protection of individuals from harmful practices that “have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color or language minority status.” Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act also set in the “nondissolution standard,” which required that racially polarized areas in which minority groups constitute a majority in a district, groups should not be split up but rather kept whole.”<sup>353</sup> In examining Latino voting strength in various Legislative districts, we can examine just to what extent the Voting Rights Act allowed for greater Latino representation.

Figure 4.1 lists the 10 Assembly and Senate districts with the highest amount of Latinos as a percentage of the total district electorate, for both the 1991 and 2001 redistricting plans.

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<sup>351</sup> Bruce Cain, Iris Hui, and Karin Mac Donald, “Sorting or Self-Sorting: Competition and Redistricting in California?” *The New Political Geography of California*, pg 245-246. (Berkeley; IGS Press, 2008).

<sup>352</sup> Mark E. Haddad , “Getting Results under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act,” *The Yale Law Journal* Vol. 94, No. 1 (Nov., 1984), pg 140, Published by: The Yale Law Journal Company, Inc. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/796318>- pg 140-141

<sup>353</sup> Bruce Cain, Iris Hui, and Karin Mac Donald, “Sorting or Self-Sorting: Competition and Redistricting in California?” pg 249.

**Figure 4.1-10 Most Latino Senate and Assembly Districts for 1991 and 2001 Redistricting Plans**

Chart 1

1991 Assembly Districts- Districts with Top 10 Highest Latino Electorate Percentages						
District	Counties		Total Registered Voters			%Latino
AD 50	Los Angeles (LA Cty, Bell Gardens)		90758			79.05%
AD 58	Los Angeles (Montebello)		156724			58.06%
AD 57	Los Angeles (Baldwin Park)		133221			53.92%
AD 39	Los Angeles (San Fernando)		120538			50.04%
AD 45	Los Angeles (Central LA Cty)		119604			47.12%
AD 49	Los Angeles (Alhambra)		139002			46.85%
AD 46	Los Angeles (Central LA Cty)		77266			45.43%
AD 69	Orange (Santa Ana)		99896			44.93%
AD 31	Fresno, Tulare Counties		127804			42.95%
AD 79	San Diego (National Cty)		136236			42.45%
<b>Average Assembly District Electorate Size for 1991</b>						
195,540						
1991 Senate Districts- Districts with Top 10 Highest Latino Electorate Percentages						
District	Counties		Total Registered Voters			%Latino
SD 30	Los Angeles (LA Cty, Bell Gardens)		247482			65.75%
SD 24	Los Angeles (El Monte)		272223			50.31%
SD 22	Los Angeles (East Los Angeles)		196870			46.45%
SD 16	Fresno		271669			39.80%
SD 32	Los Angeles, San Bernardino		294473			35.60%
SD 20	Los Angeles (San Fernando Valley)		284737			31.34%
SD 40	San Diego (National Cty)		342710			27.65%
SD 34	Orange (Santa Ana)		267443			27.11%
SD 25	Los Angeles (Inglewood)		291957			24.00%
SD 29	Los Angeles (Pomona, Covina)		395650			22.82%
<b>Average Senate District Electorate Size for 1991</b>						
391,079						
<b>Estimated Latino Percentage</b>						
<b>of Total Statewide Electorate for 2000: 16.31%</b>						
All data from UC Berkeley Statewide Database, percentages by Author						
District summaries from UC Berkeley Statewide Database,						
<a href="http://swdb.berkeley.edu/resources/">http://swdb.berkeley.edu/resources/</a>						

## Chart 2

## 2001 Assembly Districts with Top 10 Highest Latino Electorate Percentages

<b>District</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>Total Registered Voters</b>	<b>% Latino</b>
AD 46	Los Angeles (Culver City)	86367	67.65%
AD 50	Los Angeles (Bell Gardens)	121919	63.04%
AD 39	Los Angeles (San Fernando)	109053	56.85%
AD 58	Los Angeles (Downey)	163183	54.66%
AD 45	Los Angeles (East LA)	121227	51.55%
AD 57	Los Angeles Baldwin Park)	156712	50.78%
AD 69	Orange ( Santa Ana)	109501	45.30%
AD 62	San Bernadino County	133318	44.04%
AD 31	Fresno (Fresno, Reedly)	140317	43.89%
AD 30	Fresno( Coalinga)	127132	43.36%

**Average Assembly District Electorate Size for 2001**

202,633

## 2001 Senate Districts with Top 10 Highest Latino Electorate Percentages

<b>District</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>Total Registered Voters</b>	<b>% Latino</b>
SD 30	Los Angeles(Bell Gardens)	289935	60.19%
SD 24	Los Angeles (El Monte)	285135	52.68%
SD 22	Los Angeles (Downtown LA)	200360	50.93%
SD 16	Fresno, (San Joaquin)	251920	46.13%
SD 40	San Diego, Riverside	331352	44.44%
SD 32	Los Angeles, San Bernardino	274399	41.75%
SD 20	Los Angeles (San Fernando)	254698	39.85%
SD 12	Stanislaus, Merced	332556	31.80%
SD 34	Orange	261261	31.75%
SD 27	Los Angeles	341443	26.42%

**Average Senate District Electorate Size for 2001**

405,267

**Estimated Latino Percentage****of Statewide Electorate for 2004: 17.82%****Estimated Latino Percentage****of Statewide Electorate for 2008: 20.2%**

All data from UC Berkeley Statewide Database, percentages by Author

District summaries from UC Berkeley Statewide Database,

<http://swdb.berkeley.edu/resources/>

\* See appendix for citation both charts for Figure 4.1- Note: represents individuals with Spanish surnames, and may therefore include individuals who are not ethnically Latino.

Under both the 1991 and 2001 redistricting plans, Latinos constituted sizeable majorities in several Assembly and Senate districts. But these majorities arose in districts with registered-voter pools far under the average for their respective years. Compared to the general, statewide electorate, Latinos have the advantage in smaller, legislative contests where they have strength in numbers. Understandably so, the most Latino electorates lay in areas with a traditionally large Latino population, such as Los Angeles County, San Bernardino County, and San Diego County. Few, if any of the districts, lie in Northern California. These advantages set the stage for the spike in Latino representation in the state Legislature after 1994. Bruce Cain observes in *Governing California* that “from 1990 to 1995, primarily because of redistricting, 17 new minority assembly members and four new minority state senators were elected to office. When term limits took effect from 1996 to 2001, minority gains rose to 33 new members in the Assembly and 9 new minority senators.”<sup>354</sup> The apparent favorable conditions in Legislative districts versus the statewide electorate partially explains why Latino candidates have had less success in winning statewide offices such as insurance commissioner, attorney general, or even the governorship.

Even though new redistricting practices serve as the primary explanation for the ascension of more Latinos to the state Legislature, the imposition of term limits for state officials in 1990 created new opportunities. Originally, the enactment of Proposition 1A in 1966, which professionalized the state Legislature through increased funding and resources, eventually allowed for powerful Assembly Speakers such as Jess Unruh and Willie Brown to firmly keep

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<sup>354</sup> Bruce Cain, Thad Kousser, and Karl Kurtz. “California: A Professional Legislature After Term Limits” *Governing California*, pg 39-65. (Berkeley; IGS Press, 2006)

the Senate and the Assembly in Democratic hands.<sup>355</sup> Incumbents enjoyed the resources available to a full-time Legislature, and they eventually abused the power that came with their almost certain reelection.<sup>356</sup> Growing incumbent unpopularity among voters after a Federal Bureau of Investigation sting revealed the corruption of the state Legislature, resulted in the enactment of Proposition 140 in 1990, which limited Assemblymembers and Senators to 6 and 8 years in office respectively. By 1996, the effects of term limits became more apparent, as more incumbents found themselves at the end of their tenure. Dramatic increases in the Latino Legislative Caucus membership reflect the subsequent “rapid churning of officeholders” that “created increased opportunities for demographic shifts”<sup>357</sup> Figure 4.2 on the following page reflects this change.

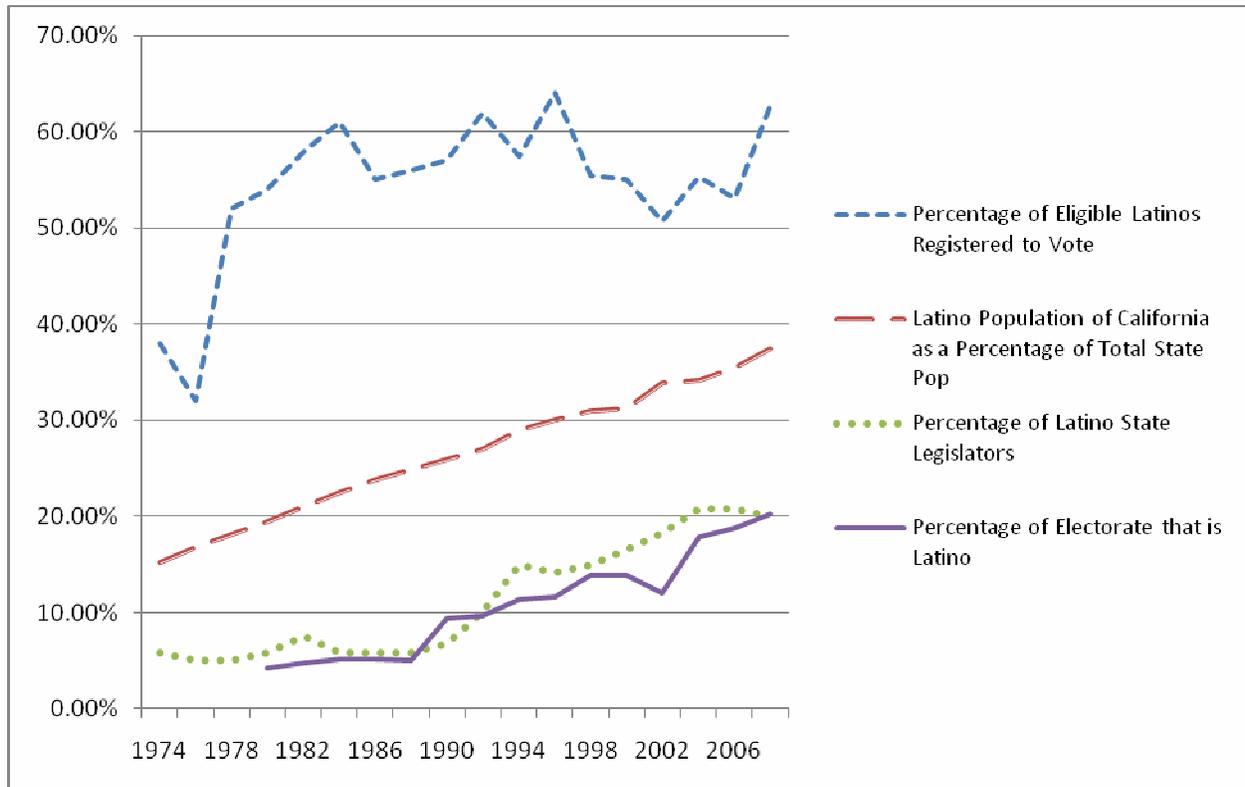
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<sup>355</sup> Ibid, pg 40.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid, 47.

**Figure 4.2- Latino Legislative Caucus Membership Versus Population, Electorate, and Registration**



\* Source- Compiled using data from California Department of Finance Demographics Research Unit, Los Angeles Times Exit Polls, Census Current Population Surveys, National Association of Latino Elected Officials, California Latino Legislative Caucus Membership Lists and The Public Policy Institute of California- Percentages based on author's calculations- See appendix for citation data.

The establishment of a new Citizens Redistricting Commission enacted through Proposition 11 in 2008 may also have added affects on Latino representation. Newly appointed Commissioner Gabino Aguirre remarks that “the mission of the redistricting process is not to make districts more competitive, it is to try to make them more representative.” As some Democratic incumbents benefited from past redistricting processes that allowed them to greatly influence the field they played on, this begs the question of whether new, more representative districts could potentially hinder Democratic and Latino election prospects. Commissioner

Aguirre remarks the following on the future of Latino election prospects under new redistricting laws:

“As far as whether, if there were a finite number of voters, with the same ethnic distribution and proportions that existed 10 years ago, then perhaps if we were to draw the lines then it might work to the detriment of the Democratic party, but we’re a decade later into 2011, and the population picture has shifted. There has been quite a jump in Latino growth in California as there is in certain parts of the U.S., but especially here in California, and just looking at the logic of how Latinos tend to vote Democrat, I think, that what will probably happen, in making districts more representative of what are called their communities of interest, that we are going to have more Latinos running for Congress or for office and those that are going to win, I think, are the ones that are actually representing the interests of the community. If we look at the issues that have pulled the community together, especially here in California, then you can think about Prop. 187, Prop 209, those kinds of issues, the immigration issue, the health care issue, jobs, education, that tend to bring the community together, then anyone who runs for an elected office in those areas, where there’s Latino concentrations, must speak to those interests, anyone who doesn’t, isn’t going to get elected. So looking at the correlation between Latinos and Democrats, which is high, I think that’s going to continue.”<sup>358</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Latinos will essentially continue to play a critical role in the Legislature because of the preservation of their communities of interest. As such, their thoroughly developed relationships, although imperfect, with politically active groups such as labor unions, will allow for the continued election of Latino candidates to office. Overall, we can draw a few conclusions from these observations. First, Latino voters have a myriad of political predispositions and do not have

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<sup>358</sup> Commissioner Gabino Aguirre of California, phone interview by author, 7 April 2011, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

the same ideological stances, which means that their differences move upward through the officials they elect and ultimately affect the types of policies they can build unity on. But seeing as how Latinos still overwhelmingly identify with the Democratic Party, which has had continued success in state elections over the past three decades, they can still adopt formidable positions in the Legislature. Because institutional changes such as the Voting Rights Act and term limits have created new, viable election opportunities for Latino candidates, we can expect them to have a continued, influential presence. This will continue to translate into important policy roles for Latinos, which signifies their successful political incorporation into California politics.

## **Conclusions on Latino Political Power**

Dr. Gabino Aguirre's experience as a long-time Latino activist and elected official provides insight into Latino experience in California. Originally from Juarez, Mexico, Dr. Aguirre, the son of farm worker parents, immigrated to California at the age of 15 to seek the economic opportunities he could not find in his impoverished home town.<sup>359</sup> He joined the military during the Vietnam War, where he quickly began forming his own political opinions. Upon returning to California, he made the decision to try earning a university education, and enrolled in community college in 1969.<sup>360</sup> He successfully transferred to UC Santa Barbara, where, motivated by the mobilization of his fellow Latinos during the Chicano Movement, he joined the La Raza Libre group and the "Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán" or MEChA.<sup>361</sup> It was here that he saw just how underprivileged Latinos were in "the land of opportunity" as they had little access to health care, a quality education, or government. It was with these groups that he developed a passion for politics and activism, so that he could help other members of his exploited, underprivileged Latino community excel. After graduating from college in 1974, Dr. Aguirre continued his activism through the United Farm Workers and saw just how society had structurally inhibited Latino progress through prejudice and discrimination. Dr. Aguirre knew that he needed to continue rooting himself in community to address the socioeconomic and political obstacles of Latinos.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Commissioner Gabino Aguirre of California, phone interview by author, 7 April 2011, digital recording, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

Dr. Aguirre continued his work of organizing for Latino political campaigns throughout the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, he also obtained a Masters in Education from the University of Southern California, and a Ph.D. in Social Science and Comparative Education from UCLA.<sup>363</sup> By 2002, after spending over 40 years working for Latino causes and improving his knowledge of politics, Dr. Aguirre won the election for a seat on the Santa Paula City Council.<sup>364</sup> Only one year later, the Council elected him Mayor of Santa Paula. He would continue working for the public after he left the city council as a high school principle, up until his retirement in 2007.<sup>365</sup>

A new opportunity to serve the Latino community came in 2008 with the enactment of Proposition 11, which established the first ever Citizens Redistricting Commission as a means of entrusting the formerly political practice of drawing legislative districts to an independent group of arbiters. Eager to take on a task that had once been used to dilute minority voting power, Dr. Aguirre took an interest in the position of Redistricting Commissioner. The Commission would consist of 14 members representative of the state's political and ethnic diversity, and would openly accept applications in 2009. Dr. Aguirre quickly doubted himself after he learned that over 30,000 applicants vied for the first eight seats on the commission, and that many of them possessed impressive qualifications and accomplishments.<sup>366</sup> Dr. Aguirre remarked of the decision to continue on with the application process, that "I think that's a common misconception that we have as Chicanos and Latinos, that 'no way' attitude. It's like we don't

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

even have a chance, in our hearts we think that there's no way."<sup>367</sup> But Dr. Aguirre believed that he could do his community justice by bringing his experience to the Commission, and so after a lengthy application process, the State Bureau of Audits selected him for an interview in a pool of 120 candidates.

Numerous organizations and individuals that had worked with Dr. Aguirre in the past came to testify on behalf of his qualifications for the position before the Applicant Review Panel. The Applicant Review Panel, impressed by his history of community involvement, leadership qualities, and analytical capabilities, sent his name with that of 36 other applicants for selection by the state Legislature on September 3, 2010. The state Legislature would only select eight candidates, who when then select the remaining six members of the Commission. Although the Legislature did not select Dr. Aguirre, the first eight candidates knew that he was the right person for the job. And so on December 15, 2010, Dr. Gabino Aguirre became one of the first 14 individuals to serve on California's historic Citizens Redistricting Commission. Commissioner Aguirre now feels that voters in California have the power to draw "truly representative districts." Commissioner Aguirre's endeavors reflect the essential drive and self-knowledge that has propelled Latinos onto the political stage. Having grown weary of the status quo, more and more Latinos, like Commissioner Aguirre, have taken to educating and organizing themselves to spread the hope to other communities that they can transcend the obstacles that come with poverty or disillusionment.

Not all Latinos in California get to have the opportunities for success that Dr. Aguirre has had. For many of them, a continued lack of educational and economic opportunities, either for

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

reasons of residency status, or structural societal inhibitions, keeps them from even perceiving that they can extricate themselves. But in the present, Latinos have established an unprecedented political presence based on organic alliances growing from their communities, through interest groups and politicians, and into impactful policies. While certain economic realities may keep Latinos from having equal access to the roads to the middle class, they have powerful access to California's political institutions. They make their own opportunities now, like Commissioner Aguirre did. Currently, more than any other time in history, California's Latinos possess the political resources to produce the changes they need to improve their quality of life. A history of conquest, civil suppression, and institutional barriers has prolonged Latinos' struggles in California over the course of 150 years. But every defeat and victory has come together over time to form the foundations of the full political incorporation Latinos have today.

Latinos worked together on a statewide scale to make this happen. Every voter registration drive that began during the Chicano movement sparked a chain of political activism into the future where generations of Latinos, either directly from immigrant families or native "Californianos," set the precedent for their communities to fight for their political representation. Some moments galvanized Latinos more than others and became key points for the development of Latino political presence. The Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s, symbolized by the actions of the United Farm Workers unions and student activists, allowed Latinos to unabashedly assert their civil rights. With the electoral reforms set in place by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, its amendments, and term limits for state legislators, new opportunities arose for Latinos to channel their activism into government institutions on a scale unseen in the past. For decades, Latinos worked to empower themselves, and moments of resistance by the majority to their increasing presence, such as the enactment of Proposition 187 in 1994, convinced them to

mobilize in such a way that competitors could no longer ignore them. Now, having capitalized on their growing population and the examples set forth by pioneering Latinos such as César Chavez, Senator Arthur Torres, Richard Alatorre, Hilda Solis, and Commissioner Aguirre, they have shown that they are here to stay.

But Latinos have to make sure that they stay rooted in the mission of their community: to maintain a politically resounding voice that can call for continued economic and social growth. That Latinos had only until the mid 1990s began assuming leadership roles in the state Legislature suggests that they are still learning how to direct and use their political capital. Some legislators representing Latinos may have difficulty in forming policy consensus and acting upon them efficiently, because the Latino public varies in its opinions and ideologies. Their strength in government institutions therefore is only as strong as their activity at the community level, where they must face the challenges of staying politically active through economic recessions and empowering immigrant Latinos who have much to give to California, but still struggle at the bottom. For this reason, sustained, full political incorporation of Latinos in California will depend on how well Latino politicians, activist groups, and voters reinforce one another's progress. For the time being, Latinos can count on having a continued and steady presence, but should they face serious challenges along the way, we can expect them to continue to fight as they always have.

## Appendix

### **Figure 1.1 and Figure 4.2 Citation Information: Compiled from several sources**

1. U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Reported Voting and Registration Reports, "" Population Characteristics (P20) Reports and Detailed Tables-1980's"  
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10. Population Estimates from CA Dept. of Finance Demographic Research Unit- **For 1970-1990 Data:** "Revised Ethnic Population Estimates: July 1970 to July 1990." , **For 1990-2000 Data-** "E-3: California Race/Ethnic Population Estimates: Components of Change for California Counties, April 1990 to April 2000," **For 2000-2009**, "Current Population Survey: California Two-Year Average Series" **all from**  
<http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/view.php#objCollapsiblePanelEstimatesAnchor>

**Figure 4.1 Citation Information**

1. *UC Berkeley Statewide Redistricting Database*- "Report on minority registration from the 2000 General Election using 1991 districts. (Senate)," and "Report on minority registration from the 2000 General Election using 1991 districts. (Assembly)," accessed on 4/11/11, [http://swdb.berkeley.edu/info/statetext/state\\_reports.html](http://swdb.berkeley.edu/info/statetext/state_reports.html)
2. *UC Berkeley Statewide Database*, "Reports (using 2001 districts) for the 2004 General Election for registration and Statement of Vote by assembly district," and " Reports (using 2001 districts) for the 2004 General Election for registration and Statement of Vote by senate district. " [http://swdb.berkeley.edu/info/statetext/state\\_reports.html](http://swdb.berkeley.edu/info/statetext/state_reports.html)

**Notes: All percentages for Figure 1.1, Figure 4.1, and Figure 4.2 based on Gustavo Cubias II's calculations.**

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### **References-Conclusion**

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**Note: all quotations, anecdotes and data in conclusion directly from phone interview with Commissioner Gabino Aguirre.**