

National Hispanic Groups Urge President-elect Obama to Decrease the Digital Divide and Advance Minority Media Ownership in New Administration

Technology 2008-11-28 11:31:22

Washington, DC – Leading national Hispanic organizations this week called on President-elect Obama to make enhancing minority access to digital opportunities and media ownership an early priority of his new administration. In a joint statement sent to the transition team, the ASPIRA Association, Inc., Latinos in Science and Technology Association (LISTA), Cuban National Council (CNC), Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Institute for the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly, Inc. (IPR/HE), and National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) outlined actions the new president must take, including affordable high-speed access, creation of minority media ownership opportunities through DTV sublicensing, and capacity set-asides on all multi-channel video platforms for national non-profit minority controlled broadcasters.

The statement calls on a four point media agenda:

- 1) Ensuring that the transition to digital television (DTV) creates new opportunities for minority ownership. Minority owned and controlled entities should be permitted to hold commercial and non-profit licenses for sufficient bandwidth to accommodate single streams of programming which are also required to be carried on multi-channel video services.
- 2) Creating a capacity set-aside on all multi-channel video platforms for minority owned and controlled non-profit entities that are not owned or controlled by a broadcast, satellite or cable interest.
- 3) Making 'Diversity of Voices' a key factor in all Communications. When considering mergers, spin-offs, license transfers and eligibility for public broadcasting funds, policymakers should move to policies which enhance diversity of voices from multiple sources in all media.
- 4) Embracing a national policy of affordable high speed internet. Lack of broadband availability exists in alarming frequency in America's urban and rural communities.

The groups urged President-elect Obama to examine the current landscape that through corporate consolidation and brand extensions have concentrated power in a small number of media giants. "Today there is little opportunity for growth of new and emerging minority-owned broadcast, satellite and cable programmers," said Ronald Blackburn, CEO of ASPIRA. "President-elect Obama must make 'Diversity of Voices' a top priority in all communications policy decisions and embrace a national policy of affordable high speed internet access for all Americans. Unless serious efforts are undertaken to create an antidote to media consolidation, we risk having our community's image, culture and its first amendment rights in the hands of a very few corporate powerhouses."

During the campaign, then-Senator Obama advocated for reduced length of television station licenses and more diversity in ownership of broadcast media. In a written statement to the Federal Communications Commission, a spokesperson for then-Senator Obama expressed the candidate's positions favoring shorter license renewal terms for broadcasters so that they would be subject to more public scrutiny, as well as criticizing the FCC for allowing broadcast consolidation.

"The election of President Obama is an opportunity for a fundamental change in the way children, public schools, and low-income communities are being prepared for the 21st Century," said LISTA National President, Jose Marquez. "Our country lags behind other nations in broadband deployment in an ever-changing global economy. President-elect Obama must take the necessary steps to ensure that every American has access to high speed internet service, and provide the necessary tools to enable children across the country to consider careers in science and technology."

Guarione M. Diaz, President and CEO of the Cuban National Council adds, "Media ownership by U.S .Hispanics is an important component of our community growth and prosperity. Moreover, access to educational programming by non

profits will complement the learning process of Hispanic children, and in some cases play a unique role in the development of a healthy identity. Hispanic owned or controlled media will be an important step in the narrowing of the current digital divide affecting U.S. Hispanics.”

Additional information about the statement can be obtained from the six leading Hispanic organizations listed below.

About the ASPIRA Association, Inc. (ASPIRA)

The ASPIRA Association, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization devoted to the education and leadership development of Puerto Rican and other Latino youth. The ASPIRA Association promotes the empowerment of the Puerto Rican and Latino community by developing and nurturing the leadership, intellectual, and cultural potential of its youth so that they may contribute their skills and dedication to the fullest development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community everywhere. Presently, ASPIRA serves over 25,000 students each year in over 400 schools, through its core activity, the Aspira Clubs. The Aspira Association's Web site is located at www.aspira.org <<http://www.aspira.org>> .

About the Latino in Information Sciences and Technology Association (LISTA)

LISTA (www.a-lista.org <<http://www.a-lista.org>>) promotes the utilization of the technology sectors for the empowerment of the Latino community. We are an organization that is committed to bringing various elements of Technology under one central hub to facilitate our partners, members and the community with the leverage and education they need to succeed in a highly advanced technologically driven society. LISTA Mission is to educate, motivate and encourage the use of technology in the Latino community and empowering them to bridge the digital divide. LISTA believes in "justice and access for all" LISTA counts on its 3,500 National members and 12 chapters from NY to California committed to the closure of the digital divide.

About the Cuban American National Council (CNC)

CNC has pioneered alternative education models in South Florida and helps provide affordable housing to low-income elderly people across the United States. To date, the non-profit CNC has helped more than 3,500 at-risk students remain in school, made 36,800 direct job placements; created more than 4,400 new jobs; awarded over 85 internships to needy students; published more than 60 policy papers and books, and built new housing units for 1,700 persons of low and moderate income. To learn more, visit <http://www.cnc.org>. <<http://www.cnc.org>>

About the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) was established in 1986 with a founding membership of 18 institutions. Today, HACU represents approximately 450 colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Latin America, Spain and Portugal. HACU is the only national association that represents Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). Recently, HACU was named one of the nation's top Hispanic non-profits by Hispanic Business magazine (May 2008). HACU is committed to assuring higher education access and success for Hispanic students. For more information, please visit www.hacu.net <<http://www.hacu.net>> .

About the Institute for the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly (IPR/HE)

The Institute for the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly (IPR/HE) is the largest Hispanic nonprofit organization serving the Hispanic and other ethnic/racial minority seniors and their families in New York City. The Institute was founded in 1978 and incorporated in 1979 in the state of New York as a nonprofit organization under IRS Code Section 501 (c)(3). The Institute is also home to the dynamic Hispanic Senior Action Council with over 5000 members and a network of over 100,000 participants. In addition, the Institute founded the Minority Aging Defense Council, co-founded the Hispanic Aids Forum, and sponsors the Coalition of Hispanic Service Providers. For more information, please visit www.iprhe.org <<http://www.iprhe.org>> .

About the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA)

Established in 1994 in Washington, DC, the National Hispanic Medical Association is a non-profit association representing 36,000 licensed Hispanic physicians in the United States. The mission of the organization is to improve the health of Hispanics and other underserved populations. As a rapidly growing national resource based in the nation's capital, NHMA provides policymakers and health care providers with expert information and support in strengthening health service delivery to Hispanic communities across the nation. For more information, please visit www.nhmamd.org

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