

# **THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS" SPECIAL REPORT**

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**Byline:** RICHARD GEPHARDT , CONGRESSMAN , HOUSE

## **Body**

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November 20, 1997

Dear Member of the Press:

I want to call your attention to the attached report entitled, -The GOP Anti-Latino Congress." The report outlines the anti-Latino agenda advocated by House Republicans 104th and 105th Congresses. The Republicans have pushed proposals ranging from an effort to deny much-needed aide to legal immigrants to refusing to end the partisan investigation into the election of our colleague Loretta Sanchez.

In 1996, Hispanic-Americans voted in larger numbers than ever before - with the number of Latino registered voters increasing nearly 30% from 1992 to 1996 to more than 6.6 million nationwide. One of the reasons Republicans hold such a narrow majority in the House is their failure to represent the interests and views of Hispanic Americans. The Latino vote in 1998 will have a significant impact on the outcome of the midterm elections.

If you would like a copy of this report in Spanish or should you have any questions, please contact Elizabeth Miller in my office at 202-225-6760.

Yours very truly,

Dick Gephardt

Democratic Leader

THE

GOP

ANTI-LATINO

CONGRESS

A Special Report Prepared by House

Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt

November 20, 1997

THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS

## THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS" SPECIAL REPORT

Last week marked the one-year anniversary of the election of Loretta Sanchez, the first Hispanic Congresswoman from Orange County, California, who succeeded in unseating the Republican Bob Dornan. After his defeat, Dornan made wild allegations of massive voter fraud as an excuse for his defeat.

One year later, Republicans in the House continue to search high and low for any evidence to substantiate the Dornan allegations; but have failed. According to the Los Angeles Times, some of Dornan's so-called "suspect voters" have turned out to be marines, nuns, senior citizens, and even some Dornan supporters. But one year later, rather than admit that Dornan had no proof behind his allegations, Republicans continue to drag out the search.

It is dear why Republicans continue to pursue this matter. This is an all-out effort to intimidate and harass new citizens and those with foreign surnames and stop them from voting. This is obvious as Republicans are not checking the citizenship of voters in any other close election across the country. As the President of the non-partisan League of Women Voters has noted, the Committee investigation "is being carried out in ways that may intimidate future voters..." (Los Angeles Times, 7/13/97)

Further, Republicans are pursuing, under the guise of "campaign reform," a bill that would erect significant barriers to ballot box, particularly those with Hispanic names. The Horn bill requires Attorney General, INS and Social Security Administration to provide INS data and SSN numbers to any "election official" who calls 66800 number to ask for info on any registered voter. The bill would overturn privacy protections in current law, essentially allowing people's social security numbers to be on voter registration lists that are accessible to the general public.

Republicans have every reason to hope that Hispanic and other minority voters stay home at election time. That is because in 1996 Hispanic-Americans voted in larger numbers than ever before and supported Democrats by a significant margin.

Specifically, the number of Latino registered voters increased nearly 30% from 1992 to 1996 to more than 6.6 million nationwide and 75% of these registered Hispanic voters cast a ballot in 1996 compared to the 49% general voter turnout. In 1996, Hispanic voters sided with Democratic congressional candidates by an overwhelming 72 to 26 percent margin. according to Voter News Service, up from a 59 to 37 percent margin in 1994. (Roll Call, 11/7/97)

That is because Republicans are advocating an agenda that is openly hostile to minorities in this country, particularly Hispanic Americans. While America was founded to be the land of freedom and opportunity, Republicans have pushed mean-spirited proposals ranging from an effort to deny much-needed aid to legal immigrants to denying public education to undocumented children. This report documents the Republicans' anti-Hispanic agenda.

### GOP Trying to Put a Good Face on Their Record

Even Republican commentators have noted the huge problem that the Republican party has when it comes to Hispanic Americans. As Paul Gigot recently wrote, "the two studies [in California] all but shout that unless Republicans repair their fractured relations with the states Hispanics, the party will soon be a permanent minority." (Wall Street Journal, 8/22/97) Frank Luntz, a Republican and Immigrant Education Program provides federal funding to school districts across the country to help 1.4 million limited-English-proficiency (LEP) students. (1995 CQ Vote #626, 8/4/95)

### English Only

While Republicans sought to out funds for bilingual education, they were seeking to restrict now immigrants access to the Federal Government and the voting booth.

Toward the end of 104th Congress, Republicans passed a unnecessary, mean-spirited and dangerously divisive bill (H.R. 123) to declare English as the official language of the U.S. government and require the Federal Government to conduct most of its official business in English. The bill also would have erected barriers for Hispanics at the voting booth by eliminating the current requirement that bilingual voting "ballots be provided in areas with voters that do not speak English. (1996 CQ Vote #391, August 1, 1996)

## THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS" SPECIAL REPORT

\* At the same time, Republicans rejected a Democratic proposal to state that the Federal Government should promote English as the common language and to expand educational opportunities so that all residents to become fully proficient in English.

105th Congress

### Welfare/SSI Fix

After passage of the welfare bill, the President introduced a package of changes to help ameliorate the effects of the bill on legal immigrants. During the negotiations on the budget agreement, Republicans agreed to Democrats' proposal to: "Restore Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid eligibility for all disabled legal immigrants who are or become disabled and who entered the United States prior to August 23, 1996."

However, when it came time to put the deal into actual legislation, the House Republicans reneged. The House GOP reconciliation bill (H.R. 2015) would have harmed Legal immigrants by denying SSI benefits to thousands of disabled legal immigrants, who should be covered under the budget agreement.

In other words, the bipartisan budget agreement would have protected the most vulnerable individuals by providing a safety net for all immigrants in the country when the welfare law was signed who have suffered - or may suffer in the future - a disabling accident or illness. However, the GOP bill directly violated that agreement by limiting benefits only to those who were actually receiving benefits on August 22, 1996 - not for those who were in the United States then and later become disabled.

For example, a now healthy 65-year-old who was in the United States last August and later develops Alzheimers would have received benefits under the bipartisan budget agreement - but will not receive benefits under the GOP bill. This is a betrayal of the most needy among elderly legal immigrants.

Republicans' indifference to the plight of legal immigrants who become disabled was demonstrated by one of the leading Republicans on welfare reform. When asked what he expected legal immigrants to do if they suffer the misfortune of becoming disabled, Shaw replied: "I guess they wrote him his briefing book 'Language of the 21st Century' "Republicans barely maintained their Congressional majority in 1996, and a major reason ... was the utter collapse of the Hispanic vote."

Now, Republicans are desperately trying to put a good face on their record. As the Hill (10/8/97) recently pointed out, Republicans have:

- \* created a New Majority Council in the Republican National Committee to highlight Republican issues that would be popular with the Hispanic community;
- \* sought to downplay their opposition to the affirmative action and their support for English-only laws;
- \* Speaker Gingrich has hired a Spanish speaking spokesperson and has begun to translate his press releases into Spanish.
- \* Central America Bill - Republicans enacted a bill to provide some relief from deportations called for under last year's immigration bill. Unfortunately, Republicans have chosen to selectively apply these provisions granting full relief only to Nicaraguans and Cubans, and only partial relief to Guatemalans and Salvadorans.

However, a few cosmetic gestures cannot hide the anti- Hispanic agenda that Republicans have been pushing for the past three years.

104th Congress

### Welfare Bill and Legal Immigrants

## THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS" SPECIAL REPORT

At the beginning of the new Republican Congress, a key priority for Republicans was the welfare bill in their extreme Contract with America. Not only did that measure balance the budget on the backs of lower-income Americans, it disproportionately hit legal immigrants many of whom have lived in the United States for many years and paid their taxes. Republicans voted overwhelming to deny access to Food Stamps and the SSI (Supplemental Security Income) program to all, legal immigrants. Republicans overwhelmingly voted to cut \$ 22 billion - or one-half of the cuts in the welfare bill - in benefits to immigrants.

## Restrict Access to Education

Not only did Republicans target legal immigrants, many of whom were elderly or disabled for cuts in federal benefits, they pushed policies that would limit children's access to public education.

\* Deny Public Education - Republicans voted on the immigration bill (H.R. 2202) for the Gallery amendment, which would have given states the option of denying public education to undocumented immigrant children despite the opposition of law enforcement. The amendment would require states to check the documentation of families, discrimination would be promoted against students who merely look or sound foreign. (1996 CO Vote #75,312W6)

\* A 50% Cut in Bilingual and Immigrant Education - The Republican Congress voted to cut Bilingual and Immigrant Education by \$ 104 million or by 50% in FY 1996. The Bilingual can go home." (USA Today, 6/5/97)

The story of the Republicans backing off the commitments they made In the bipartisan budget agreement was reported in the New York Times on June 5, 1997 in an article entitled "GOP Backing Off A Deal to Restore Aid to Immigrants" "House Republicans today backed away from their commitment to restore federal aid for certain legal immigrants, prompting the Clinton Administration to complain that the Republicans were violating the bipartisan budget agreement reached Just five weeks ago.. The Republicans are playing with political fire in restricting benefits for legal immigrants. Their proposals have proved unpopular in parts of Florida, Texas, and other states with many immigrants.

According to the Social Security Administration, the GOP bill would have the effect of protecting 125,000 legal immigrants than the bipartisan budget agreement by the year 2007.

Democrats fought, and successfully overcame Republican betrayal of these legal immigrants, to ensure that all legal immigrants in the country when the welfare bill was signed would be eligible for SSI, which provides cash to low-income aged and disabled - regardless of when they become disabled.

## Census

Republicans are adamantly fighting efforts by the Census Bureau to accurately count the population for purposes of adjusting congressional districts. House Republicans attached to their version of the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations bill a policy rider banning the Census Bureau from using statistical sampling in the 2000 Census. (By contrast, the Senate-passed bill does not contain a rider banning sampling.)

In the 1990 Census, more than 4 million people were not counted, and many of those not counted were minority voters. By opposing Census efforts to count everyone, Republicans are seeking to undercount minorities, reduce minority representation in Congress, and protect their tenuous majority in the House. As the head of the Republican National Committee has said Republicans could lose as many as 25 seats if the census is conducted accurately. (Congressional Quarterly, 6/21/97)

It is evident that the census issue must be about the politics of excluding minorities rather than based on the policy, given that the scientific community is staunchly supportive of sampling as the most effective way of reducing the Census undercount, and it would save taxpayers some \$ 800 million to conduct the Census in this more accurate manner. As David Broder recently wrote, "I can find almost nothing to sustain the Republicans' objections [Republicans' objections [to census sampling] other than a simple calculus that they can more easily hold the House in years to come if millions of hard-to-find people - typically minorities or low-income mobile youths - are left

## THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS" SPECIAL REPORT

out of the calculus when congressional districts are drawn to Census specifications." (Washington Post, August 20, 1997)

The Census Bureau has supported the targeted use of scientific sampling for the 2000 Census both to improve accuracy and to eliminate the problem of undercounting in urban and rural areas that was significant in the 1990 census. The problem of undercounting in the 1990 census was particularly prevalent among Native Americans, Hispanics, and African Americans who were undercounted by 12.2 percent, 5 percent, and 4.4 percent respectively. Without sampling, the Census Bureau estimates that The 2000 Census would miss 1.9% of the U.S. population or 4.8 million people.

The scientific community clearly supports the use of sampling as the best way of conducting the census. A recent study by the National Academy of Sciences endorsed the use of sampling in concluding that sampling, a statistical technique widely used in modern statistics, as the only way to ensure the most accurate census count. In addition, the Department of Commerce's Inspector General has concluded that prohibiting the use of sampling could drive up the cost of the census by \$ 800 million.

Even Barbara Bryant, the Republican-appointed director of the Census Bureau under President Bush, states that she supports the decision of the Census Bureau to use sampling in the 2000 Census. She recently said:

I am very much in favor of the plan the Census Bureau has. It builds on work I started back in 1990. - (Washington Post, 8/20)

Republicans held up the disaster relief bill for two months over their insistence to undercount Hispanic Americans in the 2000 Census.

And yet, despite the lack of merits to their argument, extremist House Republicans have been willing to hold up the Commerce-Justice-State appropriations bill in order to impose a ban, on sampling.

Immigration: 245(i)

One of the key issues that has been holding up completion of the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations conference report has been an effort by certain right-wing House Republicans to require hundreds of thousands of aliens to immediately leave the country - by refusing to extend Section 245(i) of the immigration code.

Section 245(i) permits individuals who are eligible to become legal permanent residents but have technically violated the immigration laws to remain in the United States while they adjust their status. The only people who can use-Section-245(i) those who are lawfully entitled to legal status because a close family member - such as a spouse - or an employer has sponsored them. Under 245(i) these individuals must pay a fine in the amount of \$ 1,000 to the immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). These revenues are then used to increase detention efforts and improve INS services.

Under current law, Section 245(i) will expire on November 7. If 245(i) is B21 extended, beginning on November 7. individuals will have to return to their home countries before their immigration status can be adjusted - which in many cases will split up families.

The House position, in passing the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations bill on September 30, was to permit Section 245(i) to immediately expire. By contrast, the Senate passed the Commerce-Justice-State bill with a permanent extension of Section 24-561.

This permanent extension of Section 245(i) is supported by the Clinton Administration and by broad range of business labor, and religious organizations - including the National Association of Manufacturers, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, AFL-CIO, UNITE, U.S. Catholic Conference, American Jewish Conference, Lutheran immigration and Refugee Services, and Presbyterian Church, USA.

And yet, despite the wide range of support for permanent extension of 245(i), key House Republicans are insisting that the Commerce-Justice-State bill be held hostage until their demand is met that 245(i) be allowed to expire on

## THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS" SPECIAL REPORT

November 7 - which would require hundreds of thousands of aliens currently in the United States to leave the country immediately. This extremist GOP position would have devastating consequences for hundreds of thousands of families.

Extension of 245(i) becomes even more crucial when viewed in conjunction with the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (PL 104-208). This law, signed into law on September 30, 1996, bans individuals who have violated their status from entering the United States for three or even 10 years. If 245(i) is not permanently extended and an employee must leave the country to obtain permanent residence, that employee could be barred from entering the United States for at least three years, and possibly ten.

On October 29, 98% of House Democrats but only 32% of House Republicans voted against a motion offered by Rep. Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) to instruct House conferees to insist on the House position requiring Section 245(i) to expire. Despite this defeat, Rep Rohrabacher and other right-wing Republicans continue to insist that 245(i) not be extended.

The permanent extension of 245(i) is a common-sense, reasonable measure - strongly supported by an enormously wide range of business, labor, and religious organizations.

The final conference report on Commerce-Justice-State extends 245(i) through January 14. Despite Republican insistence that thousands of immigrants leave the country immediately, Democrats fought hard and were successful in getting an extension. These Democratic efforts allowed at least 1 million immigrants to remain in the United States while seeking permanent resident status: (Washington Post, 11/14/97)

Rep. Chenoweth the GOP Expert on Minority Issues

The Republicans complete lack of concern regarding minority issues is evident through their spokepeople on diversity. The California Republican party selected as the keynote speaker for their "Pride and Diversity" breakfast Rep. Helen Chenoweth, who has stated that only endangered species she knows is "white Anglo Saxon males." Rep. Helen Chenoweth has also adamantly opposed the Forest Services' practice of recruiting minority applicants from outside the northern Idaho region, arguing that blacks and Hispanics do not move to Idaho because of its cold climate. "The warm-climate community just hasn't found the colder climate that attractive. It's an area of America that has simply never attracted the Afro-American or the Hispanic. ' (The Hill, 5/14/97)

Leave Town Without Putting an End to Bob Dornan "s Witchhunt

Against Loretta Sanchez

It is simply outrageous that, more than a year after the 1996 election, Republicans are adjourning for more than two months without closing the investigation into Loretta Sanchez's election. Over this year-long period, House Republicans have been conducting a blatantly partisan investigation into U.S. Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez's election last November to represent California's 46th district. Spurred on by sore loser Bob Dornan, who lost his seat in Congress to Sanchez.

Republicans have carded out an unprecedented, outrageously partisan investigation, in which they have manipulated the Federal Contested Election Act, abused subpoena authority, forced Congresswoman Sanchez and the taxpayers to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, and invaded the privacy of 500,000 Americans.

Nearly a year of inquiry and \$ 500,000 in wasted taxpayer dollars later, Republicans have utterly failed to prove Dornan's loss was the result of electoral fraud. In fact, virtually all of Domain's original allegations have been shown to be completely without merit. According to the Los Angeles Times, some of Dornan's so-called "suspect voters" have turned out to be marines, nuns, senior citizens, and even some Dornan supporters. Despite their failure to come up with proof, Republicans have refused to dismiss the case, even in the face of an unrelenting campaign by House Democrats and Hispanic organizations.

Instead, Republicans have found yet another delaying tactic. On October 24, House Oversight Committee Chairman Bill Thomas (R- CA) handed confidential Immigration & Naturalization Service records over to California

## THE GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS" SPECIAL REPORT

Secretary of State Bill Jones, asking him to see what he can drum up. Jones, a Republican, already certified that Sanchez was duly elected last November.

This is clearly an effort by the Republican leadership to harass and intimidate Hispanic voters. Of all the close elections last year, Republicans are checking the citizenship of voters in exactly one district - a district with a large Hispanic population represented by an Hispanic woman. Through the Dornan- Sanchez investigation, Republicans have been intimidating and harassing new citizens and people With Hispanic surnames to stop them from voting.

Why'? Because in 1996, Hispanic-Americans voted in larger numbers than ever before, and supported Democrats by a significant margin In large part because of the GOP's anti- Hispanic and extreme record. Given the GOP record in 1997, seem likely that this will continue.

## Classification

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**Organization:** GOP ANTI-LATINO CONGRESS (69%)

**Person:** LORETTA SANCHEZ (58%)

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