To: Interested Parties  
Cc: Virginia House Democratic Caucus and PFAW  
From: Joshua Ulibarri, Meryl O’Brien, and Alexis Cantor, LRP  
Re: The Latinx Challenge in the 2019 Virginia Legislative Elections  
Date: June 20, 2019

Recently conducted research shows that Latinx voters in Virginia are significantly less motivated to vote in this year’s legislative elections compared to other progressive targets. In fact, it is not even close. Progressives have plenty of time to act now, contact these voters, and convince them that their priorities can be addressed at the state level. This memo is brief; it outlines the problem and offers some input on how to increase motivation. As usual, Joshua and his team stand by ready to answer questions and help.

Here are the key findings:

1. **Latinx voters, with higher partisan scores and lower turnout scores, are less motivated to vote than other progressive targets.** On a scale of 0-10, where 10 represents “Very Motivated”, only 40% of Latinx drop-off targets self-rate as a 10. Comparatively, 59% of drop-off African Americans and 60% of drop-off Anglos rate themselves a 10. As the graph shows, total motivation is also low: 12-points below African Americans and 9-points below Anglos.

![Motivation Chart]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very motivated</th>
<th>Total Motivated</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>72</td>
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Notably, while both Anglo and African American turnout targets are more motivated today than they were at this point in 2017, the same is not true for Latinx voters. We conducted a similar turnout study in 2017\(^1\) for the House Democratic Caucus and here is how the data compares\(^2\):

- In 2017, 49% of Anglos rated themselves a 10 on the turnout scale; today that share is 60% - an **11-point increase**.

- In 2017, 54% of African Americans rated themselves a 10 on the turnout scale; today that share is 59% - a **5-point increase**.

- In 2017, 51% of Latinx voters rated themselves a 10 on the turnout scale; today that share is 40% - an **11-point decrease**.

**2. Although the Latinx community is less motivated than other progressive targets, they are still strong Democrats.** We risk leaving too many votes on the table if we do not begin to target these voters, today. Sixty-two percent of Latinx voters say they would vote for the Democrat if the election were held today. That is 11-points stronger than Anglos, and closer to African Americans (74% of African Americans would vote for the Democrat).

**3. The Latinx community is unique in that they are more concerned about preventing bad things from happening.** Overall, 58% of drop-off targets say “to stand up and help make sure good things happen” is a top motivating factor to vote, while 50% say “to stand up and prevent bad things from happening” is a top motivator. That order flips when we consider Latinx voters. Among Latinx voters, the top-rated reason to vote was to “to stand up and prevent bad things from happening” (52%), while “help make sure good things happen” was third on the list.

The Latinx community, long targeted by Trump and other Republicans, are focused on protecting themselves, their families, and their loved ones. This should be taken into consideration when messaging this community (though more work should be done).

**4. It is incumbent on Democrats and the larger community to help define local and state issues as significant to these voters.** Half (50%) of all drop-off targets in this survey agree with the statement that “the issues I care most about are not addressed at the state level”, compared with 59% of Latinx and 65% of Latinx under age 45. Much work needs to be done to convince Latinx voters that the issues that are important to them are state issues – equality and fairness, protecting immigrants, standing up to the gun lobby, and making health care more affordable – in order to turn them out to vote.

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\(^1\) In 2017, this survey was focused on Northern Virginia and Tidewater region. This year we added target districts in the Richmond area.

\(^2\) LRP has polled for the VA house Democrats since 2015, in that time the Caucus has flipped 17 seats from red to blue.
5. In a focus group hosted in early June in Northern Virginia, **Latinx voters expressed doubts about whether politicians cared about their community and respected their voice.** One participant summarized how the group felt when he said that politicians often tell Latinx voters what they want to hear while they are campaigning, but that constituents never hear from them again once they are elected. When asked which party cares more about their interests, most agreed that neither party was particularly receptive, but that Democrats are better on issues of equality. This is a key challenge for Democrats and advocates. Candidates need to be authentic and not just seek votes, but also demonstrate that in the last legislative sessions since 2017 Democrats have had major accomplishments on access to affordable health care, education and teacher salaries, and gun safety.

*In summary, it is difficult to see Democrats making the gains they need this year to take control of the House of Delegates (+2 pickups) without a quick and significant reversal in motivation trends among Latinx voters. The challenge is surmountable and the campaign needs to start today.*