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## **IMMIGRATION ISSUE DRIVING LATINOS TO THE POLLS, NEW SURVEY FINDS**

**Washington, DC** – Half of Latino voters say they are “more enthusiastic” about voting this year than in previous elections, according to a new poll released today by the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). Seventy-five percent rated their interest in the election between 8 and 10, compared to 56% in a survey conducted in late September. The survey of 1,050 registered and likely voters, which has a margin of error of + or – 3.2%, was conducted by Lake Research Partners and Public Opinion Strategies November 2-6.

“From all indications, Latinos are clearly fired up about the 2006 election. And this poll bears out what previous elections have demonstrated – that while immigration is not the Latino community’s greatest concern, the issue continues to be its greatest motivator,” noted Janet Murguía, NCLR President and CEO.

The survey found that education, the economy and jobs, and the war in Iraq continue to be the top concerns for Latinos, in that order. Yet, while only 9% ranked immigration as their top concern, a majority of Latinos (51%), including half of young voters, reported that immigration was the most important or one of the most important issues in deciding their vote.

“This poll shows that attempts to use immigration as a wedge issue in this election will backfire. All of the evidence suggests that candidates’ positions on immigration will not make a difference with the vast majority of mainstream voters (see, for example, [www.immigration2006.org](http://www.immigration2006.org)), but will have a profound influence on whom Latinos will vote for today,” stated Arturo Vargas, Executive Director of the NALEO Educational Fund

Among its findings, the survey notes the key role that Spanish-language media and nonpartisan voter mobilization efforts are playing in Get Out the Vote efforts. About half of Latino voters overall and nearly half of young Latino voters 18-24 years old have heard ads or programs on radio or television urging them to vote or to get involved politically. Most Latinos also report being contacted about voting and the election, but only about one-third recalled being contacted by either political party. “Clearly, the work of our community and dozens of other organizations is being felt at the grassroots level,” said Vargas.

The survey results also suggest strong linkages between likely voters and participants in the marches and rallies last spring in support of immigration reform, especially among young Latino voters. Nearly a third (29%) of voters overall and nearly half (45%) of young voters said that they, a family member, or close friend participated in the marches.

“This extraordinary level of participation confirms that interest in the rallies and marches spread far beyond the immigrant community. That, coupled with the survey’s findings of strong and growing interest among Latinos in the election, should come as a warning to those elected officials who believe that immigrant bashing is a strategy without consequence,” said Murguía, adding, “Not only has that strategy been rebuffed by the broader American electorate, but Latinos are taking notice of politicians willing to malign their community just to get elected.”