

## Rallying Latino Voters in 2006

BY Raimundo Rojas

At the 2004 Democratic Convention in Boston, Massachusetts, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, who is a Hispanic, said, "If he [President Bush] gets 40 percent of the Hispanic vote, we've lost the race." He proved prophetic.

A couple of months later, on November 2, President Bush received as much as 45% of the Hispanic vote and went on to beat the radically pro-abortion team of Senators John Kerry and John Edwards. It was the highest percentage of the Hispanic vote a Republican running for President had received in a very long time.

That was no accident. Hispanics are naturally pro-life and the President's embrace of the culture of life resonated with them. In fact with one exception, pro-life Republicans have done very well in the Hispanic community.

In the 1980 presidential elections Ronald Reagan received 40% of the Hispanic vote over pro-abortion Walter Mondale. In 1984 President Reagan received nearly half (48%) of that vote.

In 1988 President George H. W. Bush received 47% of the Hispanic vote in his landslide victory over pro-abortion Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts. And even when he lost to pro-abortion Bill Clinton in 1992, President Bush received nearly 40% of the Latino vote.

For 12 years we saw a solid increase in the number of Hispanics willing to cross what many erroneously believed to be their party line and vote for pro-life Republicans. Many exit polls in these elections showed that issues concerning Latinos most involved their families and values that they felt were best represented by the GOP.

Then in 1996, for a variety of reasons unrelated to our issue, Senator Bob Dole only received only 25% of the Latino vote—three out of four Hispanics voted for Bill Clinton. Many commentators argued this meant that Hispanics had returned to their "natural" party, conveniently ignoring the fact that the Democratic Party had become the "Party of Death," anathema to the values of the Hispanic community.

But that was before pro-life Texas Governor George W. Bush arrived on the national scene. Defying predictions, in his 2000 presidential bid he managed to get almost 40% of the Latino vote. Four years later, he received upwards of 45% of that vote. Again, Latinos "crossed party lines" and voted for a man whose values were more in-line with theirs.

But since the 2004 elections, we have seen Congress try to stem the tide of illegal immigration. Predictably, we see the media and Democrats trying to use this again to rally Latinos into an anti-GOP frenzy.

National Right to Life is a non-partisan, single-issue organization. We work within the law to change the law on abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, and other life issues. To move our agenda forward, we need to retain pro-life majorities and/or pro-life leadership in Congress.

In 2006 we are fighting historic trends, such as the “six-year jinx”—the pattern of members of a President’s party losing in the off-year elections of his second term. We have to fight for Latino votes as we never have before.

How can we carry the Latino vote? With our message of life and of hope. While they may or may not agree with individual pro-life candidates on other issues, we must reinforce the lesson that Life must trump all other issues. And with your hard work this election cycle, we can do that.

Over the years, I have written in these pages that Latinos are a natural constituency of ours. They have proven me right over and over again. I’ll mention two quick polls—one quite recent, and one from about 18 months ago, to underscore that point.

During the horrendously painful Terri Schindler Schiavo ordeal in Florida, media outlets polled the citizens of the state on an almost daily basis. At the time I thought those polls were crass and caustic. Terri wasn’t an “issue,” Terri was a beautiful young woman whose food and water had been withdrawn.

Terri’s drawn-out, unnecessary death deeply affected us all. But that didn’t stop the local newspapers from asking whether Terri should be “allowed to die,” as if starving and dehydrating a woman to death was not actively causing her to die.

The one positive thing to come out of that constant polling is that no matter who was asking the question or how misleading the wording, consistently the only demographic exception to the pro-death-for-Terri majority were Hispanic voters.

Over and over again, whether they were registered voters or just Hispanics in general, they rejected the notion that this young woman should die. Only 38% of Hispanics disapproved of Florida Governor Jeb Bush’s actions in trying to save Terri.

More recently, a survey was taken in mid-September of voters in the state of Missouri, asking if they supported Amendment 2. This amendment to the state constitution promotes both human cloning and lethal embryonic stem cell research.

Again, Hispanics were the most opposed. The bottom line is that “life” is an easy sell to Latinos.

Our efforts, though sometimes made more difficult because of the language barrier, bear more fruit in that community. We have to make sure that as many Latinos hear our message as possible.

We must not forget those communities—no matter how small—when organizing literature drops and radio buys.

It is a tough fight this year to get the Hispanic vote. But we have the winning ticket: we promote life, and, in the end, we Hispanics treasure that above all.

Please help get the National Right to Life message of life out to your state’s Latino population.

Mr. Rojas is NRLC’s Hispanic Outreach coordinator.