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New Poll: Latinos Want CA Legislature to Tackle Pollution, Climate Change in Latino Communities

Los Angeles, CA – In a first of its kind effort, new groundbreaking data points to overwhelming support by California Latino voters on critical positions on the need for stronger state efforts in combating pollution particularly in communities of color, reducing our dependency on petroleum, and further expanding the Green Economy in Latino communities. The poll of 400 registered voters was conducted by Latino Decisions in partnership with Presente.org, Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA), and the Greenlining Institute.

The survey confirms that Latinos not only want the state of California to address global warming, climate change and air pollution, but they also expect more aggressive action to invest in locally targeted renewable energy sources rather than fossil fuels.

Latino voters also said that environmental attitudes have political consequences. When asked whether they would feel more or less favorable toward their State Representative if he or she supported a bill to reduce the use of fossil fuels, overwhelming majority of respondents (75%) said they would be more favorable to their representatives. A whopping 82% said they would be more favorable toward a legislator who supported a bill to add new penalties and fines to companies that pollute.

- 79 percent of Latinos said it was very to extremely important that the state of California address global warming and climate change
- 81 percent of Latinos said it was very to extremely important that the state of California reduce air pollution from oil and gas.
- 74 percent of Latinos said it was very to extremely important that the state of California develop renewable energy sources as a solar and wind power.
- 88 percent of Latinos agree that renewable energy should account for half of all energy produced by the state by the year 2030.

But when asked about how to address the problem, Latino voters respond more enthusiastically to environmental justice and protection strategies that are specifically devoted to targeting most impacted communities, particularly Hispanic and other communities of color.

- 87 percent of Latinos agree that *we need to increase investment in clean public transportation in our communities to decrease the amount of cars on the roads and 75% support the state to provide financial assistance for low- income families in buying low emission cars.*
- 87 percent of Latinos say they would like to see more “Green Jobs” in the Latino community.
- 81 percent of Latinos agree that *our state government should devote more resources to address environmental issues and pollution in Black and Latino communities.*
- 89 percent of Latinos agree that *if the state invests money to develop new technology for renewable energy and pollution control, we need to make sure those investments go equally into the Latino community.*

Reacting to the Latino environmental justice poll, the project conveners issued the following statements:

Arturo Carmona, Executive Director of Presente.org:

“We are thrilled by the data in this poll, which finds overwhelming support for key arguments in the environmental justice fight and validates strong Latino commitment to fighting climate change. Latino voters are sending a powerful message that we see a bright future without petroleum, with less pollution, where most resources and pollution reduction mandates benefit the most impacted communities in the state. Our community is demanding a healthier, greener, a more just, and more equitable environmental transformation of our economy and society. But the poll also sends a chilling message of accountability to those elected officials still willing to advance the lies of Big Oil and their allies saying ‘we don’t support you and you do not speak for us’.”

Byron Gudiel, Executive Director of Communities for a Better Environment:

“Oil industry operations and fossil fuel combustion in transportation accounts for more than half of greenhouse gasses emitted in California in addition to causing wide range of other serious health impacts in Latino communities as well as low income communities and communities of color.”

“The community is fully aware of these negative impacts, and they strongly support urgent decisive action by their elected officials as demonstrated by this revealing poll results. We need massive and equity-based clean energy investments through a just transition away from fossil fuels towards a sustainable path in economic development, job creation and building healthy, safe and resilient communities.”

Martha Arguello, Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles:

“Community and individual health is threatened by poor air quality, the drought, wildfires, and extreme heat. Our use of fossil fuel comes with a steep price tag for asthma, cancer, low birth weight, and all chronic illnesses linked to poor air quality and climate change.

“Latinos want and expect strong climate policies that address air pollution, promote clean energy production and promote real economic opportunities. We know Latino health is threatened by the drought, extreme heat and other weather events. Additionally, climate change will make our current air pollution problem worse, as days get hotter we will see more ground-level ozone. With fires we will see increased particulate matter and with that will come more emergency room visits, hospitalizations and acute asthma attacks. As this poll suggests, addressing climate change is a public health imperative that Latinos understand and take seriously. Reducing health disparities and protecting the health of future generations is a major priority for Latinos who are calling for a rapid transition to a just and healthy economy by investing in clean energy solutions.”

Strela Cervas, Co-Director of the California Environmental Justice Alliance:

“California’s new majority wants clean, equitable energy. Latino and other communities of color have been on the frontlines of fossil fuel pollution for decades and now our neighborhoods are among the most vulnerable to climate disruption and extreme weather. That’s why we need to be on the frontlines of the solution: clean, renewable, local energy.

“This poll clearly demonstrates that Latinos see the need for renewable energy to combat climate change. Latinos want to see the economic benefits as well – living wage, sustainable and healthy jobs – and they want to see renewable energy investments and infrastructure spread equitably across all California communities.

“It’s time to ensure that low-income communities of color no longer bear the disproportionate impacts of energy pollution. As California creates our “next generation” of climate policies, we have the opportunity to build an even stronger renewable energy system that invests in the communities who need it the most. Equitable renewable energy can provide some of California’s

most over-polluted communities with a clean, healthy environment and create living wage economic opportunities.”

Alvaro Sanchez, Environmental Equity Director at the Greenlining Institute:

"California Latinos understand how clean energy investments can bring both jobs and cleaner air to Latino communities -- communities that now breathe some of the dirtiest air in the country. We've made a promising start, charging polluters and putting those dollars into clean transportation, energy efficiency and solar power for low-income communities, and Latinos want to see those investments grow. Every community needs a piece of the clean energy future."