



RAMONA E. ROMERO
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

July 7, 2009

VIA FACSIMILE AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Senator Patrick Leahy
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6275

Dear Senator Leahy:

On Monday, July 6, 2009, the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) and twenty-five other preeminent national Hispanic advocacy organizations wrote to Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) to express their dismay at his mischaracterization of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Educational Fund, now known as LatinoJustice PRLDEF, as an extremist organization. The letter to Senator Sessions reads, "LatinoJustice PRLDEF is a mainstream and respected civil rights organization [] that serves not only the Latino community, but the nation as a whole because it advances the basic American principles of equal opportunity and equal access to justice for all in our society."

As the national voice of the Latino legal community, the HNBA is concerned that Senator Sessions' use of provocative terms will fan the flames of ethnic animosity. While we have the right to disagree on specific issues, the HNBA and national Latino advocacy organizations expect and are entitled to better from a sitting member of the United States Senate. A copy of the letter to Senator Sessions is enclosed for your convenience.

We look forward to working with you and the Senate Committee on the Judiciary but will not stand for mischaracterizations about the nature of our work or that of our sister organizations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ramona Romero". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ramona E. Romero
National President



July 6, 2009

Via Facsimile and Electronic Mail

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
335 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sessions:

We write on behalf of twenty-six (26) preeminent national Hispanic advocacy organizations to express our deep dismay at your efforts in the past week to mischaracterize as extremist the work of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF), now known as LatinoJustice PRLDEF. As organizations committed to helping Latinos across this great nation overcome barriers of racism and poverty so that they may flourish in pursuit of the American Dream, your attacks on LatinoJustice PRLDEF send a chilling message to us all.

LatinoJustice PRLDEF is a mainstream and respected civil rights organization founded in 1972 -- a time when Puerto Ricans living in the United States had no voice and were largely excluded from participating in public life. From the courts to town councils, from boardrooms to classrooms, Puerto Ricans (and other Hispanics) were simply invisible. Over the years, LatinoJustice PRLDEF expanded its advocacy mission to encompass all Hispanics, and has worked for decades to advance voting rights, access to meaningful educational opportunities, housing and employment rights, and protections for migrants from exploitation. LatinoJustice PRLDEF also mentors youth from all backgrounds who are interested in entering the legal profession. Thousands of attorneys, including prominent civic, government, and corporate leaders, credit PRLDEF for helping them realize their dreams of becoming lawyers.

The importance of LatinoJustice PRLDEF's work earned it early support from distinguished leaders such as Senator Jacob Javits, former U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, former New York Attorney General Robert Abrams, and New York County District Attorney Robert Morgenthau. Its support has continued to grow since the 1970s. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg has recognized LatinoJustice PRLDEF's positive contributions to his city, and the organization has earned the financial backing of leading foundations and corporations.

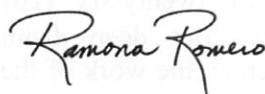
Past directors of LatinoJustice PRLDEF include former New York Governor Hugh Carey, the Honorable Jose Cabranes of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow and former Congressman Herman Badillo. These

Honorable Jeff Sessions
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are just a few examples of the many distinguished lawyers who have served on the board of this well-respected, mainstream organization.

LatinoJustice PRLDEF is a strong and vibrant institution and its work serves not only the Latino community, but the nation as a whole because it advances the basic American principles of equal opportunity and equal access to justice for all in our society. While we each have the right to disagree on specific issues, LatinoJustice PRLDEF's body of work deserves our respect and yours. Attacks on Latino advocacy and civil rights organizations are not new – we have seen figures in the media mischaracterize and slander our good works, using provocative terms that fan the flames of ethnic animosity. We expect and are entitled to better from a sitting member of the United States Senate.

Sincerely,



Ramona E. Romero
National President
Hispanic National Bar Association

Writing on behalf of:

Cuban American National Council (CNC)
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA)
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
National Association of Hispanic Publications (NAHP)
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives (NAHFE)
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Image, Inc.
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)
National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC)
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts (NHFA)
National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC)
National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA)
National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP)
National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc. (NPRC)
SER – Jobs for Progress National, Inc. (SER)
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP)
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC)
U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI)