

Immigration and the Latino Community: A Personal Perspective

Members of the 34th District Democrats will work with the Latino Vote Project and the 15th District Democrats to help the 15th develop organizational infrastructure and prepare for the unique challenges they face. Ivan Weiss, chair of the 34th, is excited to have this sister district relationship, saying, "We've got a lot of potential to bang on a lot of doors." The 34th is prepared to listen to the 15th and chair Wendell Hamigan, working with them to figure out where their needs lie on their own terms. Tanya says, "If we've got all these great volunteers, there's no reason why we can't help our districts that face such an uphill battle."

"These efforts will have ripple effects. This kind of cross-district assistance can, in Tanya's own words, "build bridges between the Western side of the mountains and the Eastern side of the mountains." We don't have to settle for the east-west and red-blue divide. Because of the partnership between the 15th and 34th, the 15th will be better prepared to engage Democratic supporters in all the various communities in their district.

If you want to get more involved in boosting voter turnout within the Latino community, contact the Latino Vote Project. This year, Tania Maria Rosario is serving as director of that program, and she is enthusiastic and very eager to hear from Democrats all across the state. To contact her, please call (206) 352-3963 or e-mail her at taniamarata@wa-democrats.org.



Democrats at the May 1st rally

The work of Tanya Aguilar and the 34th District Democrats is a perfect demonstration of how we can be stronger if we work together. We need to fight the cynicism and decisiveness created by the Republicans. As Tanya says, "We can help our community and live by the values that we preach as Democrats... I want my country back."



Rally participants march for a dream

This year, Republicans are using immigration as a wedge issue. On April 10th and May 1st, hundreds of thousands of people across the country filled the streets in peaceful rallies, fighting Republican efforts to needlessly criminalize hard-working immigrants, many of whom pay taxes, serve in the armed forces, volunteer in their communities, and fulfill other responsibilities that are a part of citizenship.

Tanya Aguilar, vice chair of the 34th District Democrats and a Latina Mexican-American, took part in both of these rallies. Because Republican immigration legislation primarily targets the Latino community, this is a very personal issue for her. She says, "They're contributing, and they're not getting anything out of it... we need to stand up for our community."

There was one moment at the April 10th rally in Seattle that was especially moving for Tanya. "(Seattle mayor Greg) Nickels gave me pride to be an American when he addressed the crowd and said that all he saw were Americans standing before him," she said. This statement gets to the heart of what our country is about. "This country was built by immigrants... You can't take away the identity of America."

Tanya took part in the Latino Vote Project in 2004, where she reached out to Latino voters east of the mountains. "So many people were happy to be contacted," she said. "It means so much for them to hear a friendly voice speaking their native language." Inspired by her experiences with the Latino Vote Project, Tanya wanted to continue those efforts with her local Democratic organization.

Tanya encouraged the 34th District Democrats to adopt the 15th District Democrats as a sister district. The 15th District is in the heart of 4th Congressional District, encompassing most of Yakima County and towns like Wapato, Toppenish and Sunnyside.