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National Latino Organizations Representing More Than 5 Million Members Call on Congress to Protect the Clean Air Act

WASHINGTON (September 29, 2010) – Leading national Latino organizations called on Congress today to oppose legislation that would block the U.S. EPA from enforcing the Clean Air Act. Instead of allowing the EPA to do its job, legislators want to put our health at risk in order to give industries free rein to dump harmful pollution into our air and our children’s lungs.

“For Latinos today, protecting the Clean Air Act means jobs, better health and more opportunities for a brighter, healthier future,” said Roberto Carmona of Voces Verdes. “Hispanic-owned businesses are increasing at more than double the national rate, and many of these businesses will create jobs in construction, weatherization and other fields that will benefit from investments in energy efficiency and clean technologies. Current efforts to undermine implementation of the Clean Air Act will harm our health and the economy, derailing our country’s progress toward clean energy.”

“Political attacks on the Clean Air Act come at the expense of the well-being of millions of children, elderly persons and vulnerable populations, and Latinos are among those at greatest risk,” said Rafael Fantauzzi, Chair of the National Latino Coalition on Climate Change.

An estimated 70 percent of all Latinos in the United States live in areas that do not meet one or more of the federal government’s air quality standards, including the U.S.- Mexico border region, the Southern and Central Valley of California, Chicago, New York, Phoenix and Houston. This has led to a disproportionate number of people in Latino communities suffering from asthma and other illnesses.

These pollution problems have not only long-lasting health-related implications but economic consequences as well,” added Fantauzzi.

“Healthy communities are critical to ensuring our full contribution to our nation’s economic viability. We cannot afford to lose the critical protections of the Clean Air Act. The health of our communities and the lives of our children depend on it.”

“Study after study tells us that this is a critical issue for the Latino community,” said Elsa Ramirez, Global Warming Field Director for the league of Conservation Voters (LCV). “It’s all about what kind of future we are leaving to the next generations and creating economic and educational opportunities while protecting our children’s health.”

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Voces Verdes is the independent voice of Latino leaders for the environment. We are a coalition of Latino business owners and community leaders who advocate for sound environmental policy. We recognize the importance of balancing economic growth, environmental protection and prosperity. Visit us at www.vocesverdes.org.