

2021

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

AS REQUESTED BY MINNESOTA STATUTE 15.0145

The Council **advises** and **works** with the **legislature** and the **governor** towards the **implementation** of the economic, social, legal and political equality for Minnesotans of Latino heritage (Minn. Stat. 15.0145)





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LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR



Dear members of the Minnesota State Legislature,

As the chair of the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs (MCLA), it is my honor and responsibility to present the Council's legislative report for 2021. This year, the state and the country remained in a pandemic but that did not stop MCLA from continuing to advise, inform, and make recommendations at the legislature to improve the lives of Minnesota's Latino community.

Let's do a recap of some of the many successes MCLA has had this past year:

- About \$35 million were appropriated to recruit and retain more teachers of color and American Indian teachers in Minnesota classrooms as part of the 2021 ITCA legislation that the Council advanced in coalition with other partners.
- Our team worked with Sen. Patricia Torres Ray and Rep. Aisha Gomez on a bill that was introduced in both chambers to issue a hairdresser only license, including a model for an apprenticeship program to remove training and employment barriers to Latina and non-Latina hairdressers.
- The Council respectfully served in an accountability role with the Governor and Lt. Governor's office to make sure that Latino residents are appointed to state boards and committees that can benefit the community.
- Staff conducted several outreach activities to inform the community about our work and hear from our constituents about their needs. This includes a visit to Red Wing with the participation of state legislators and civic leaders in that city.
- MCLA staff participated in 13 task forces and advisory groups to bring the voices of Latino constituents in areas such as distance learning, government response to COVID-19 and culturally relevant approaches to vaccination, supporting Latino advocates in the area of education, or advising on workforce development needs.
- Partnered with the Center for Rural Development and Policy and the two ethnic councils in a research project about immigrants and refugees, and their relationships with local governments.
- With the help of an external consultant, Council members participated in the creation of and finalized a four-years Strategic Framework for the agency that was approved by the board.

At the federal level, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and the state of Minnesota has received a historical amount of resources to help combat the pandemic and reopen the economy. With current and new staff, the Council will work to make sure our community receives some of the benefits of the surplus.

As the Council was still able to succeed on many issues in 2021, 2022 will still carry on the work the state has to do to prevent any more social and economic damage from this pandemic. It is going to take a lot of people-power to do so and I would like to kindly remind the legislature to rely on the effective Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs to disseminate information to the Latino community and to learn more of what our community expects from the state government in order to close opportunity gaps still prevailing in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Marco Hernández
2021 MCLA Chair, CD3



INTRODUCTION



The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs presents its 2021 Legislative Report to the Minnesota State Legislature. As our Council chair detailed on his letter, 2021 was a year of challenges associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but also a year in which MCLA continued to provide leadership, advise, and stewardship when the state and our constituents needed it the most.

After several staff changes and transitions, the Council ends this year fully and stably staffed with no vacancies on its board. As we all know, the pandemic has caused many disruptions, including in the labor market, and government is a sector that has also been affected by new trends in employment. Nevertheless, during 2021, MCLA strengthened the role of board members by aligning their statutory service with the staff's work, completing MCLA's 2022-2025 Strategic Framework in the month of June. Working together, the Council's staff and Board members participated in various leadership development activities that strengthened the Council's capacity to represent our communities and provide needed insight to the state. Also, the recently instituted board's internal Legislative Committee helps staff strategize and offer recommendations regarding the Council's overall legislative and policy work.

Providing an adequate physical environment where staff works and

interacts with board members and the community is an important dimension of our work. Although the pandemic has precluded us from being physically in the office, this year we were able to renovate our offices, adding a wall between the Executive Director's office and the conference room. This renovation, with Latino art displayed in several areas, adds a professional and more functional space to the day-to-day operations. We expect that, as the pandemic eases, there will be a time when staff will be able to return to a welcoming, warm, and professional space.

We continued to focus on our legislative work, ranging from supporting a comprehensive bill to increase teachers of color with key investments; raising awareness about the singular work of Latina estheticians looking at removing barriers in their profession, to working on tax initiatives to expand financial opportunities for all Latinos to achieve prosperity. Out of that work, during the Special Session, the legislative staff was instrumental in successfully securing investments to increase the number of teachers of color. Staff also supported Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) opportunities. At the same time, MCLA helped in elevating conversations around police accountability on the POST Board's *Ensuring Police Excellence and Improving Community Relations Advisory Council*, in the aftermath of George Floyd's killing.

In addition to advising the state legislature, MCLA seized the opportunity to execute its mandate providing insightful recommendations to the current administration, including policy conversations with the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to mitigate the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 in vulnerable segments of our communities, especially essential workers in farming and agroindustry, but also in the services and hospitality economy. As the evidence and data has shown, Latino Minnesotans still face undeniable opportunity gaps in several socio-economic indicators that help explain why Latinos are disproportionately impacted by this public health crisis.

Despite multiple unexpected staff changes during the year, 2021 also presented to the Council opportunities to effectively adapt and to continue serving as a bridge between the community and state government. Our team advised key government agencies, including the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Health. We also contributed on multiple occasions to a wide array of legislators and state agencies with recommendations gleaned from our outreach to our constituents about different kinds of needs. For instance, MCLA created a specific webpage with resources and information about unaccompanied children (Unaccompanied Children Resource Portal of Minnesota). In addition, we connected staff at



various community organizations with information and resources provided by the State of Minnesota.

After supporting community efforts to increase Latinos' participation in the 2020 Census count, we learned this year that Minnesota kept all its eight congressional districts, very likely thanks to the participation of communities of color in the decennial census. Despite the undercount of Latino individuals and children not only in Minnesota but in the nation, the unsurprising growth of our community surely helped in keeping those congressional seats. According to the 2020 Census, we are 345,640 Latino Minnesotans, the third largest demographic group in the state. The Latino growth will likely have repercussions in the new political boundaries that will be redrawn with the redistricting process that is expected to end this spring.

Based on these figures, MCLA prepared and released during the 2021 Latino Heritage Month a comprehensive report with demographic and socioeconomic characteristics to reflect the diverse face of Latino Minnesotans. We hope that the report "A Portrait of Hispanic/Latinx in Minnesota" that is enclosed, will also be a useful resource and piece of information. Finally, MCLA was part of various hearings and conversations with legislative leadership about redistricting principles, as the state legislature and the courts prepare the new political maps that will



MCLA's staff and board in a virtual meeting brainstorming the Council's Strategic Framework

remain the new political landscape of the state for the next decade. As Chair Mary Murphy indicated during the first House redistricting hearing in August 2021, MCLA's Executive Director was the first person to offer testimony in the state regarding this key process.

In this new environment, MCLA successfully worked with both political parties to advance legislation that will benefit all Minnesotans, and more specifically our constituents. This report will detail MCLA's bipartisan legislative work, community outreach and engagement, and its 2021 fiscal year expenditures.

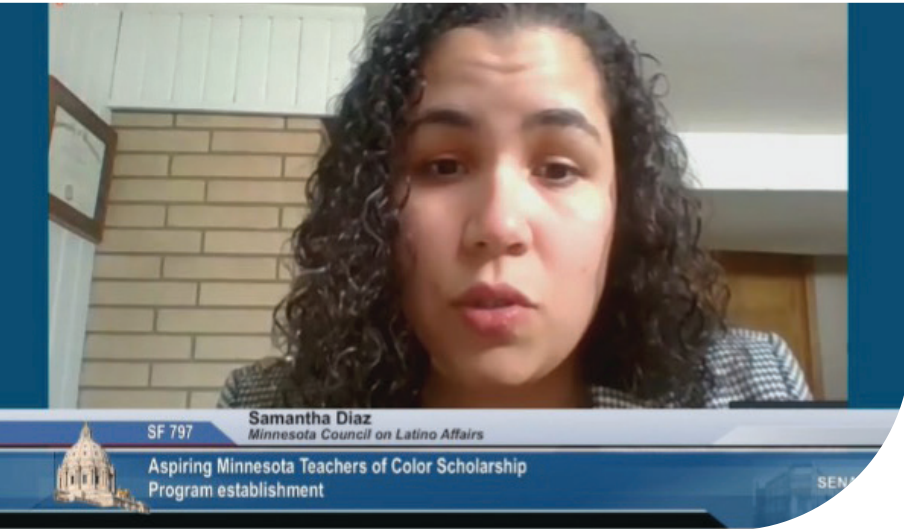
In reading our annual report, the legislature will see that MCLA is a

state agency that, despite its small size and faced with unpredictable challenges, provides level-headed leadership in important policy areas and properly informs decision makers about the recommendations and aspirations of Latinos in the state. At a time when demographics continue to change and Minnesota becomes more diverse as informed by the 2020 Census, with baby-boomers retiring in communities across the state and thousands of jobs available in crucial sectors like health care, education, services, engineering, agriculture, food processing, and manufacturing, the imperative need to close opportunity gaps is more than ever a top priority for the economic health of Minnesota.

MCLA'S MAIN GOALS AND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS



As a small-staffed and efficient state agency, MCLA prioritizes its work through a three-pronged approach: 1) Advise the state legislature, the Governor and Lieutenant's office, and executive branch agencies on the policy priorities of Minnesota's Latino community, 2) Connect the Latino community and the State of Minnesota, and 3) Influence public policy while adding value to state government.



Samantha N. Diaz, Legislative and Policy Director, testifying in support of the 2021 Increase Teachers of Color Act

1 ADVISE

The primary purpose of MCLA is to provide non-partisan, fact-based analysis, and advise to state government. Whether it is through our in-house research, direct meetings with legislators, testifying during hearings, or holding policy-focused events, MCLA works to ensure that it properly advises the State of Minnesota on the Latino community.

2 CONNECT

MCLA finds a variety of ways to connect Minnesota Latinos and state government. The agency prioritizes any appropriate channels to directly connect Latino community members to their state legislators, state agencies, or other levels of government. The lived experiences, stories, and perspectives of Latino members are insightful and powerful.

2021 Legislative Recaps MCLA released two bilingual legislative

reports that assessed the 2021 regular and special legislative sessions, highlighting some positive outcomes for the community, and stressing pending changes moving forward.

Latino Listening Session for the project "Truth and Action: Addressing Systemic Racism in the Minnesota Criminal Justice System." MCLA convened a group of Latino community members as part of this project at The Dispute Resolution Institute at Mitchell Hamline School of

Law. Along with other community partners, this transitional justice project aims to combine a grassroots approach to recording the stories of victims and working with key leaders to implement change in the criminal justice system. Findings of this project are expected to be released in 2022.

2021 Census Information and Redistricting In 2020, MCLA's legislative team participated in various community events to raise awareness to secure Latino





participation in the Census count. In 2021, MCLA was a part of a series of community events, legislative hearings, and meetings to learn and inform about redistricting principles, how Latino communities would want their interests reflected in new voting and political maps that will be redrawn, and disseminating information about this important

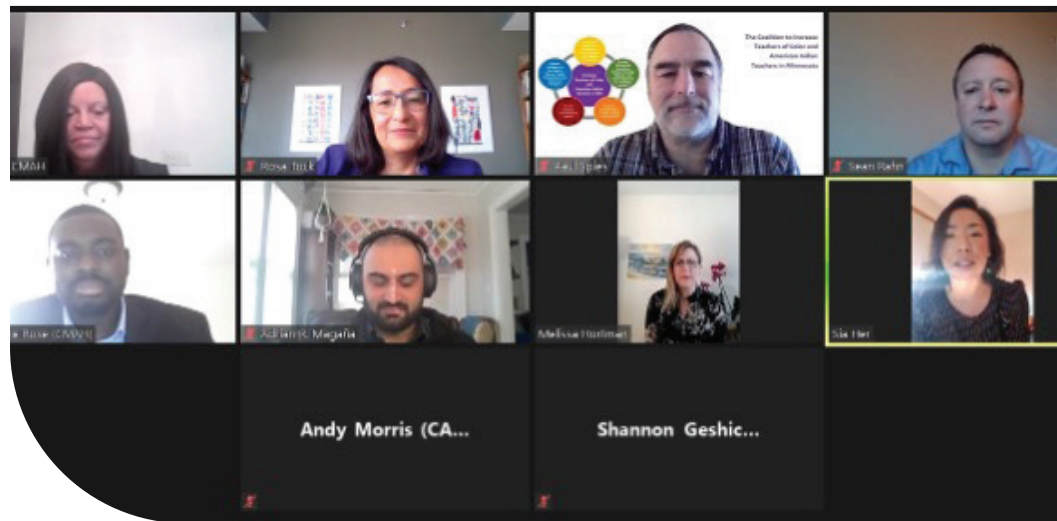
process that only happens once every ten years.

Panel with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and Latino Leaders MCLA’s Executive Director, was invited by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis to participate in a discussion with Judge Alan Page and Alene Tchourumoff -Senior

Vice President, Community Development and Engagement-, to talk about what quality of life for Latino Minnesotans means, along with leaders of CLUES, HACER, and LatinoLEAD. This public event was hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank and MCLA supporting its planning and organizing efforts.

3 INFLUENCE

Whether it is providing non-partisan research and analysis, or advising a state legislators on Latinos who live and work in their district, MCLA works hard to create a space for dialogue to help influence and shape policy by providing timely expertise that adds value to state government and makes the state a more prosperous and inclusive place for every resident.



Virtual meeting with Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman and the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (April 2021)

2021 Community Listening Session Report in Red Wing During the summer, MCLA conducted one community engagement session with Latinx residents of Red Wing. The community meeting was coordinated in cooperation with a Latino organization, the Hispanic Outreach of Goodhue, which helped MCLA invite members of the local Latinx community to participate in the meeting. This town-hall style session was attended by Representative Barb Haley (R) and Representative Jon Koznick (R).

2021 Latino Heritage Month

MCLA worked with the Office of the Governor and Lt. Governor to draft the Latino Heritage Month Proclamation and translate it into Spanish. In addition, this year, one of our policy fellows analyzed data from the 2020 Census released during the spring to highlight the changing demographics in the Minnesota Latino Community, as well as a series of socioeconomic indicators that show the vibrancy of this community but still underlying gaps that need to be addressed.



2021 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES



EDUCATION

1. As part of the Increase Teachers of Color and Indigenous Teachers legislation, address the need for districts and charter schools to be required to provide for a welcoming environment and have a curriculum that is anti-racist, respectful, and inclusive for all in their strategic plans.
2. Advocate for improved classroom experiences (virtual and in person) and more funding in English Language Learners (ELL) programming. Indexing the ELL funding to increases in general revenue aid would allow for moderate increases to better support districts and charter schools.
3. Advocate for programming that emphasizes Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) will be critical to student academic achievement. Providing districts with flexibility on relief funding to continue or enhance mental health services is vitally important to meeting the needs of our students.
4. Work with state entities to Intentionally require visual aids and verbal translations when communicating with families that would benefit from school services. Communication is essential in providing support to students and parents in order to maintain engagement for districts and charter schools.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/TAXES

1. Include Individual Taxpayer Individual Number (ITIN) users into Minnesota's Working Family Tax Credit and Homestead programs. These steps will help families achieve financial stability and will align with the state's agenda on economic equity.
2. Consumer Protection: continue working on a bill to secure financial transactions in the preferred language used by consumers at the beginning of vehicle deals.
3. Continue to support and expand relief measures for renters experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19.
4. Ensure that Latino Veterans have access to all applicable tax benefits in Minnesota.

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

The top priority for Latinx Minnesotans is the health and safety related to and beyond COVID-19. With heightened exposure to the virus, and disproportionate infection rates, the Council supports a more consistent, concise, coordinated, and intentional outreach to ensure "essential" workers have the vital information they need to protect themselves and their families.

NEW MINNESOTANS

1. Support allocation of funding to expand information and resources for migrant workers and New Minnesotanos, including funding for emerging non-profits that can become hubs of information and integration for new immigrants.
2. Support driver's licenses for all.



SUMMARY OF METRICS OF SUCCESS



LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

DRAFTED OR IN
COLLABORATION

4 pieces of legislation

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY/
POSITION STATEMENTS

20 position statements or
committee testimonies

200

MEETINGS WITH
LEGISLATORS, LEGISLATIVE
AIDS, AND EXECUTIVE
BRANCH AGENCIES

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND LISTENING SESSIONS

20

public
presentations

1

listening session with
Latino community
members "Truth &
Action Project"

1

listening session in
Greater Minnesota
(Red Wing)

1

participation in a
community health
care fair (Farmington)

1

new informational
web page to welcome
unaccompanied
children to Minnesota

MEETINGS WITH CONSTITUENTS,
COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND
LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

100 virtual meetings and phone
communications

CONSTITUENTS REACHED THROUGH
SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRADITIONAL
COMMUNICATIONS

30,000 constituents reached through
communications, including 12 e-newsletters
and several interviews in local Latino media

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND IN-HOUSE DATA ANALYSIS

2021 COMMUNITY
LISTENING SESSION
REPORT IN RED WING

(Bilingual publication released
in November 2021)

2021
SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC
REPORT

"A Portrait of Hispanic/Latinx
in Minnesota" (Bilingual
publication released in
October 2021)

POLICY BRIEF

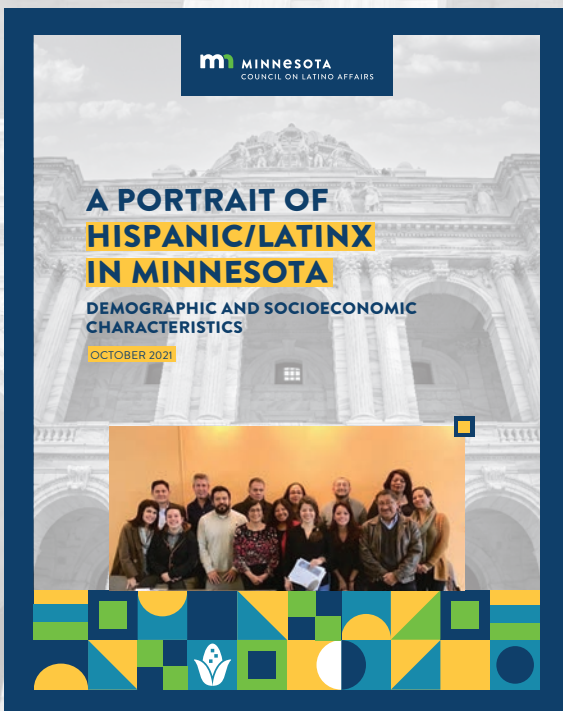
The State of Housing
for Latinx in Minnesota"
(Released in February 2021)

SUMMARY OF METRICS OF SUCCESS



COALITION WORK AND PARTNERSHIPS

- The Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota
- Distance Learning Advisory Group
- Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (Department of Human Services)
- Minnesota Healthy Partnership (Minnesota Department of Health)
- POST Board’s “Ensuring Police Excellence and Improving Community Relations Advisory Council”
- Tax Legislative Table
- Governor’s Workforce Development Board (GWDB)
- COVID healthcare coverage for the immigrant community
- Research Partnership with Ethnic Councils and the Center for Rural Policy and Development
- Community Resiliency and Recovery Workgroup (COVID-19 Interagency Group)
- Truth and Action Advisory Committee – Mitchell Hamline School of Law
- MDH’s Latinx/Hispanic Latino Leaders bi-weekly meetings



A COMMUNITY-INFORMED APPROACH TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND LEGISLATION



Consistently since 2017, in order to credibly fulfill its mission, MCLA has developed its legislative agenda through a process of community-led outreach. During the summer, MCLA conducted one community engagement session and multiple conversations with diverse constituents to hear the priorities of the Latino community.

MCLA gathered with Latinx residents of Red Wing in August of 2021. Red Wing is situated in Goodhue county and Latinos comprise about 6% of the city's population. The city is the county

seat and part of Minnesota House District 21A, which is represented by Representative Barb Haley (R) who attended the session with Representative Jon Koznick who seats on our board.

The community meeting was coordinated in cooperation with the Hispanic Outreach of Goodhue. This organization, with deep roots in the community, helped MCLA invite members of the local Latinx community to participate in the meeting. This session was designed with a different approach and methodology than other community sessions conducted

in previous years. As a bridge between the community and state leaders, MCLA wanted to hold a townhall style meeting with elected officials and civic leaders so that they could hear directly from their constituents.

The testimonies shared during MCLA's visit resonated with last year's visits when the pandemic hit the hardest our communities. There are still urgent needs for access to affordable quality healthcare (including culturally relevant mental health services), relief funding for undocumented



Group discussion, listening session in Red Wing, Goodhue County (August 2021)



A COMMUNITY-INFORMED APPROACH TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND LEGISLATION



workers and mixed status families, workplace safety for low wage workers, and access to driver licenses regardless of immigration status.

An underlying and consistently identified contributor to much of the challenging issues experienced by the state's Latino community is the disconnect and sentiment of isolation from government institutions at the local, state, and federal levels. The effects of the pandemic also resulted in gaps to access technology and guidance as

students transitioned to distance learning.

Some policy recommendations included in the report are geared towards improving the quality of life of Latino Minnesotans, eliminating systemic barriers in education and paths to financial stability, and ushering in reciprocity for the contributions they continue to make in our local economies and across the state. These recommendations will inform MCLA's legislative and policy agenda for the upcoming 2022

Legislative Session.

In sum, key findings from the conversations conducted statewide include the palpable and demonstrable resilience throughout Latinx communities. The active role of women and parents organizing through affinity networks to respond to the crisis in the face of salient inadequacies of federal aid are notable, making essential bilingual and bicultural communications more relevant than ever to support them in these unprecedented times.



Participants, listening session in Red Wing, Goodhue County (August 2021)



FY21 EXPENDITURES



General Fund **\$665,067**

Expenditures

Full Time \$278,232.87

Part Time - Seasonal.....\$84,379.10

Overtime\$321.91

Other Employee Cost..... \$4,015.30

Space Rental and Utilities \$20,160.36

Printing and Advertising..... \$ 4,538.31

Professional Technical Services.....\$ 28,706.70

Communications..... \$ 2,002.17

In State Travel\$ 851.33

Out of State Travel \$0.00

Employee Development.....\$ 349.99

State Agency Prof Tech Services.....\$1,377.11

Central MNIT Services \$ 20,357.97

Agency Specific MNIT Services \$ 1,068.01

Supplies.....\$ 8,688.88

Equipment.....\$ 38.88

Repairs and Equipment \$ 8,355.54

Other Operating Costs..... \$ 5,374.73

Total **\$ 468,819.16**



BOARD MEMBERS



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ANA VERGARA
Treasurer, Congressional District 2



URIEL PEREZ ESPINOZA
Congressional District 3



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MCLA's Chair, Congressional District 4



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IVETTE IZEA-MARTINEZ
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Secretary (At Large Board Member)



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We want to thank our four **2021 Policy Fellows**: Marleny Huerta-Apanco (University of Minnesota, School of Public Health), Estefanía Jaureguí (Hamline University), Samuel Estes (Humphrey School of Public Affairs), and Alexandra O'Farrell (Macalester College), for supporting our work this year.

THANK YOU!





ADVISE AND INFORM
ON LEGISLATION
AND POLICY WITH
LATINO
MINNESOTANS

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