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## **Latino Leaders Release Strategies for Improving Latino Health Care in America**

**Washington, D.C.** – The Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition (TLC) today released the final report of the Latino Healthcare Task Force, entitled “*Strategies for Improving Latino Healthcare in America*”.

“The report completed by this task force identifies the pressing health issues confronting Latinos in the United States and offers common sense strategies and recommendations for each,” said TLC Chairman Hector V. Barreto. “We are very excited about the quality of the research and the recommendations developed by this Task Force. The report is the culmination of the hard work and dedication of an impressive group of individuals who dedicated their time, expertise and resources for more than a year. We hope these commonsense and realistic recommendations will help pressure federal, state and local elected and appointed officials to address these important issues affecting millions of Americans.”

Download the report at [www.TheLatinoCoalition.com](http://www.TheLatinoCoalition.com)

“We call on President Bush to create a National Strategic Action Plan for Latino Health Improvement,” said TLC President Robert G. Deposada. “The purpose of this Action Plan is to analyze and review all current federal healthcare programs serving Latino communities and restructure priorities and redirect funds to optimize program productivity, coordination and effectiveness. Many of the current Latino health programs are outdated and have not evolved with the new realities and technologies in health care, and with the modern day needs and concerns of the growing Latino communities. There’s plenty of money being spent, just not in the right places or the right programs.”

The plan would span all critical federal agencies within the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (e.g., National Institutes of Health, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Health Resources and Services Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Bureau of Health Professions, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Administration on Aging) as well as external to DHHS (such as the U.S. Census Bureau, Departments of Labor, Commerce, Immigration), and would include key policymakers, private foundations, and advocacy organizations.

“We also call on Congress and the Administration to move on a series of tax incentives to help small business owners, and those workers who do not get health insurance from their job, get access to quality and affordable health insurance,” Deposada added. “The Task Force also urged the government and the private sector to promote a comprehensive and creative public education campaign to help promote health care literacy, improve enrollment in Children Health programs and preventive programs, as well as increasing the number of Latinos in the Health Care field.”

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The Task Force also called on Congress to pass serious and comprehensive medical malpractice reform, and tax incentives to help eliminate the barrier that keeps many physicians from practicing in underserved areas, particularly in the Latino neighborhoods. The report also recommends the **creation of financial and other incentives** for individuals and healthcare-related organizations to participate in and implement electronic healthcare support systems. These incentives should also include revision or elimination of regulations that create unnecessary barriers to healthcare IT. “It is absurd that your airline ticket confirmation number, your rental car record, and even your cellular phone bills and calling history are available 24/7 on-line, yet your medical records are locked away in filing cabinets somewhere, stored in paper folders,” Deposada said.

The Task Force was chaired by Dr. Josh Valdez, Senior Vice President for Health Care Management at Wellpoint Inc. The 18-member Task Force is composed of a diverse bipartisan group of professionals with broad expertise in the area of health care, including small business owners, physicians, nurses, community based organizations, corporate executives, academicians, researchers and other health care industry leaders.

The Latino Coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. TLC was established to address policy issues that directly affect the well-being of Hispanics in the United States. TLC’s agenda is to develop and promote policies that will foster economic equivalency and enhance overall business, economic, and social development of Hispanics. For more information, or to download the complete report, please visit our website at [www.TheLatinoCoalition.com](http://www.TheLatinoCoalition.com).

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