



New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force

2007–2008 Legislative Agenda

Sheldon Silver, Speaker
Peter M. Rivera, Chair



Comisión Especial sobre Asuntos
Puertorriqueños e Hispanos de la
Asamblea del Estado de Nueva York



Agenda Legislativa 2007–2008

Sheldon Silver, Portavoz de la Asamblea
Peter M. Rivera, Presidente, Comisión Especial

New York State Puerto Rican/ Hispanic Task Force



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Hon. Peter M. Rivera, Chairman
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The Battles Fought on Your Behalf

Over the past few years, New Yorkers have been under attack by a variety of political and economic forces that in combination lower our quality of life and make it harder for all those working to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

From proposed cuts to higher education funding and affordable housing programs to reducing government support for important health programs for our children and drug benefits for our senior citizens, former Governor Pataki left us a government ill equipped to handle the demands of a progressive civil society. Today the work to rebuild years of neglect has begun but time is not on our side.

Simultaneously, individuals, families and entire communities are under attack by corporations that have devised schemes that under the guise of “better business practices” are actually tools to pick the pockets of consumers. These tactics make everything from access to banking services to basic utility services more expensive for those least able to afford such corporate profit increasing schemes.

The New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force has focused its attention on some of the key issues that quietly chisel away at the economic stability of our communities, our quality of life and deteriorate the financial standing of tens of thousands of our neighbors, friends and family members.

Outlined in this report is a small sample of the work of the Task Force. Facing considerable foes with wealthy friends and powerful allies, the Task Force has advocated against these forces. Left unchallenged, these attacks on our communities will relegate our neighborhoods to a perpetual existence as incubators of poverty, dysfunction and hopelessness.

I hope you find this information useful and a resource that will help focus more attention on the issues outlined.

Additional information on the subjects mentioned in this publication can be found by visiting the Task Force web site at www.assembly.state.ny.us or by contacting my Albany office at (518) 455-5102.

On behalf of the members of the Task Force, I want to thank you for your interest in these issues. We look forward to your continued engagement in the public affairs that impact heavily on all our lives.

The future of our communities rests on your direct participation in shaping issues of critical importance to all New Yorkers.

Excelsior,



Peter M. Rivera
Chairman



Fighting Asthma in our Communities

Almost one in 13 school children suffers from asthma making it the leading serious chronic illness in children and the leading cause of hospitalizations for children under the age of 15. More than 4.8 million children nationwide suffer from asthma and more than 5,000 Americans die from the illness each year. It is estimated that asthmatic children lose 10 million school days each year.

In the Bronx there were 10,135 hospital cases of asthma in children younger than 17 reported in 2002, at a rate of more than 902 per 100,000. That is comparing to an average rate of approximately 150 per 100,000 for the rest of the state.

Poor children under the age of 4 are four times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma than children in high-income areas. Asthma is an illness that is far too common among our poorest citizens. New York City, especially children are almost twice as likely to be hospitalized as children nationwide.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), asthma's impact on health, quality of life, and the economy are substantial. The CDC has also found that the rates of severe asthma continue to disproportionately affect poor and minority populations. For example African-Americans visit emergency departments, are hospitalized and die due to asthma at rates three times higher than rates for white Americans. Overall asthma rates in the United States have doubled since 1980.

Health experts and school officials agree that to reduce the high absenteeism of children with chronic asthma that presently must leave school grounds for nebulizer treatments; this equipment must be present in schools and accessible for emergency treatments. These treatments last about 15 minutes but allow students to return to class immediately. Currently,

students requiring nebulizers for required daily treatment of asthma attacks must be sent home or sent to an emergency room.

For thousands of children in areas of our state with high asthma rates their schooling is being interrupted and the cost on our health care system is substantial. For many of these students their illness will turn their schooling into academic failure because of the high number of school days missed.

The legislature recently approved the placing of defibrillators in all public buildings in New York State to assist anyone having a heart attack. We need to place the same priority on the placement of nebulizers in all schools, starting with those with large numbers of asthmatic children.

In addition, in the event of a terrorist attack that would lead to children having to stay in school buildings for a prolonged amount of time, it is conceivable that children with severe asthma would die because they would have no access to the nebulizers that allow them to continue to breathe. At a cost of less than \$125 per machine and specialized hoses, we can provide substantial public health benefits to thousands of children.

Fiscal Implications for State: \$541,125 will allow for the placement of nebulizers in the 4,392 public schools in New York State. \$170,875 will be needed to target the 1,367 schools with the highest rates of asthma.

Fighting Pollution on School Buses and School Grounds

There have been marches through Harlem. There have been demonstrations in front of New York City Hall. Assembly hearings requested by the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force have been held. Yet the problem continues.

The dramatic increases in pediatric asthma cases throughout our state are alarming and New York has 107 neighborhoods which are considered to be in the top 5% of the most polluted communities in the nation. Simultaneously, these areas have high concentrations of New Yorkers suffering with asthma.

Diesel fuel exhausts have been documented by health experts and the federal government to pose serious health risks, especially to children. From Buffalo to Long Island this is a real problem with harmful consequences for our children.

Each school day, over two million children board over 50,000 diesel-powered school buses and are exposed to lung-irritating chemicals. For many children this exposure triggers asthma attacks. For others this exposure will lead to respiratory problems.

The proposed legislation is a simple, pragmatic and no-cost approach to dealing with idling vehicles outside school and child-care grounds. It will stop the wasteful and dangerous idling of dozens of school buses in areas congested with young children. School officials will be required to enforce the State's no-idling laws. This bill will also ban all non-emergency idling with strict enforcement by local school administrators.

In addition, under current practices, school districts and school bus operators continue to replace heavily polluting diesel fuel buses with more of the same. This legislation calls for each school district to establish a clean-fuel school bus committee that will recommend ways and timelines for the replacement of aging school buses with clean fuel-burning technologies that have been available for many years now.

The growing number of asthmatic children and the bad air quality surrounding our schools and child-care facilities cannot be ignored anymore. For years, the State Education Department has failed to move swiftly to force the purchasing of clean-fuel school buses when old polluting ones are being replaced.

This has further compounded the problem as each new polluting diesel-powered school bus purchased will be used for at least 10 years.

Fiscal Implications for State: None. Requires school administrators to use existing resources.

Fighting Gang Imagery & Disruptive Behavior in Schools

There is a strong co-relation between school gang violence proliferation and the distinctive and casual clothing school kids wear to school. This legislature sees it necessary to address and combat this issue, which is of great public concern, with all practical and empirical means at its disposal and that those means should be put into practice by all competent authorities and institutions in New York State.

A study found out that due to increased prevalence of school violence, one in five public school students feels less eager to go to school every day, one in seven feels less inclined to pay attention to learning, and one in ten stays home from schools or cuts class. Moreover, one of every 10 to 12 youths who stays away from school does so because of fear.

Meanwhile, of the 5,500 principals surveyed as attendees of the National Association of Secondary School Principals' annual conference more than 70% believed that requiring students to wear uniforms to school would reduce violent incidents and discipline problems.

More than 12 states, including California, New Jersey, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, have state policies that permit individual schools or districts to adopt school uniforms policies or dress codes. To emphasize, there have been several successful programs implemented during the past few years, with the Long Beach, California, program being by far the most widely reviewed and written about.

The program that began in the fall of 1994 requires uniforms for 70,000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. With a 98% compliance rate, results during their first years have proven the dramatic effect a successful school uniform policy can have on a school system. The first year alone they saw a 43% reduction in suspensions, 54% fewer fights, a 70% reduction in substance abuse, over 20% fewer cases of weapons possession and robbery, and an over 50% reduction in reports of battery against employees.

Other school systems nationwide likewise report similar changes in statistics. As recently as the summer of 2002, school districts were adding school uniform requirements to district mandates. The school board for Memphis City Schools (TN) voted in June, 2002, to require each school's leadership council to establish a uniform dress code policy, and more schools in the Cincinnati (OH) area were requiring either school uniforms or the adoption of standard dress codes.

For this reason, as more states in the country are implementing these policies that are working towards fighting gang proliferation, New York State should not be the exception, especially when, in the past ten years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of school students recruited by gangs.

According to *USA Today*, parents spent an average of \$185 per child buying non-uniform clothing in 1998, compared with an average of \$104 spent per child to purchase uniforms. Furthermore, a more recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* lists uniform costs; the range is \$25-\$40 per outfit.

This legislation will not only impact the social and economic status of families throughout New York State by providing inexpensive uniforms, but it will enhance students' concentration on studying rather than on forming or joining gangs. Also, it is the finding of this legislature that by requiring school students in NYS to wear uniforms it will: diminish exclusion of students based on what they are wearing, place stronger focus on academic performance,

decrease opportunity for showing gang affiliation or hiding weapons, create an atmosphere of teamwork and pride in personal appearance at school, promote safety (makes it easier to identify strangers in school), put students on a more common ground, and reduce discrepancies in administering dress-codes enforcement.

Fiscal Implications for State and Local Governments: None

Fighting to Reduce the Academic Attainment Gap through Single Gender Classes

The Task Force strongly supports legislation it introduced since 2003 that will help reduce the gender gap in achievement levels in math and science that has been documented for decades.

Presently, less than 18% of computer science degrees are granted to women and less than 30% of engineers are female. Advances in technology and biology have allowed scientists to confirm theories on the differences in learning patterns and styles of the genders. We now have important scientific data along with demonstrated accomplishments of young women in single gender instruction. The wealthy in our society have long understood the strengths of such instruction in the education of their children. However, the slow-to-change bureaucracies that administer our children's education have yet to move on the demonstrated good of such instruction. This is a greater problem for children in low-performing schools and in schools with substantial numbers of uncertified instructors. This lack of creativity is extremely harmful to communities and the future of our State.

Under this legislation, a selected number of children who are stuck in the worse-performing schools will be provided with creative approaches to help them learn.

Recent reports have documented another large increase in New York's high school dropout rate. In New York City, thousands of high school students are being pushed out of school under the direction of guidance counselors that view new graduation requirements as unattainable for English Language Learners and students in Bilingual Education classes. Documented research has shown that 33% of Hispanic women never completed high school. Statistics show that women with low levels of education have extremely high rates of poverty, become single parents, and increase the chances that their children will follow in the same footsteps.

Statistics are saddening in other low-income communities throughout our state. The number of children not performing at grade level and withdrawing from school is reaching a critical mass that will devastate our state's economy and social fabric.

It has been well documented that both girls and boys do significantly better in single sex settings, specifically in the fields of science and math. Girls perform better in all levels of academic ability and build noticeable strength in their self-esteem and self-confidence. In low-performing schools, where bullying and other intimidating behaviors are constantly present, many girls and young women will be given the opportunity to escape that environment and excel by having them participate in English, science, math and social studies core classes with students of the same gender. Furthermore all other classes and activities will be coeducational, and parents will have the option to have their children not participate in this demonstration project.

As structured, this program does not violate federal law. In fact earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Education issued guidelines that will allow schools to engage in the creative use of single gender instruction

in key subject areas. The rest of the school day would see regular integration of boys and girls in classes other than English, math, science, and social sciences.

Schools chosen by the Commissioner of the State Education Department for a demonstration project will have to reorganize their class schedules in order to meet project requirements. It is time that we begin to use creative classroom instruction to improve the academic attainment and educational achievement of our children. If it's proper for the wealthiest in our society to use such an educational structure for their children, then it is must be good enough for the masses who live on modest means.

Fiscal Implications for State and Local Governments: None

Fighting Violence in Schools Via a Multi-Lingual Hot Line

The worst school shooting in our nation's history was the Columbine massacre. An outcome of that has proven that there are far more questions than answers.

Many of the students interviewed seemed to have at least some knowledge of the violent tendencies of the perpetrators. Students may not have alerted their teacher or other authorities that something was wrong for fear of intimidation by their peers and fear of retribution or a sense of loyalty to other students.

It is obvious that the students know better than any teacher, administrator or parent what is really occurring in their fellow students' lives. The students themselves are our best resources for recognizing the warning signs of potential danger.

This toll-free number, which allows students to leave information anonymously, would enable kids to take the initiative when they see trouble in their schools.

Since they would not have to leave their names, they would have no fear of intimidation or retribution from their peers. Maybe if kids can be taught that they have the responsibility to look out for each other, fewer violent incidents will occur in the future.

Fiscal Implications for State and Local Governments: Minimal

Fighting Gang Activity and Gang Recruitment in Schools

In an effort to remove New York’s distinction of being one of the few states that does not provide additional tools to law enforcement and to the courts to fight the activities, recruitment and coercion of gangs, **Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, chair of the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force and Assemblyman Jose R. Peralta, a member of the Assembly Committee on Corrections**, have been joined by members of the law enforcement community, civic leaders, teacher representatives and former gang members to announce their strong support for passage of multiple pieces of legislation they have sponsored to combat the spreading impact of gang violence.

Peralta and Rivera, a former police officer, federal DEA agent and assistant district attorney, were once again joined by law enforcement representatives and district attorneys to demand that Albany take the growing gang problem in New York seriously and pass important legislation to help combat its proliferation, especially in schools. The group gathered earlier this year outside the headquarters of the New York City Department of Education to unveil a plan to criminalize gang activity in and around schools throughout New York.

The growth of gangs throughout urban and suburban communities and increasing gang violence and activities in and around school grounds will be

countered through the creation of ‘Gang Free School Zones.’ **The Legislation introduced by Rivera and strongly supported by the Task Force and many members of the Assembly, amends New York State Penal Law and: Defines criminal street gang and membership in such, criminal street gang activity, and school grounds; makes recruitment on school grounds punishable by 3 to 7 years in prison; and requires posting of “gang free school zone” signs around the more than 6,400 schools throughout New York State.**

According to Assemblyman Rivera, “We are here to say that if you are evil enough to threaten the life of a child, if you are evil enough to interfere with their education, and if you are evil enough to place in danger the future of our communities, you ought to be punished in a very special way.”

“Gang violence is a growing epidemic in our communities which needs to stop. We have been working on many different fronts to eliminate this menace to society. Today, we attack gang activity with tougher legislation directed towards our educational system. Gang activity and recruitment will become much more difficult in our schools, and gang members will face tougher penalties,” declared Assemblyman Peralta.

“Our schools are supposed to be safe havens from street violence, but that isn’t always the case,” said Michael Mulgrew, the United Federation of Teachers’ vice president for alternative high schools. “Gang activity on city streets can make its way into schools, putting students and staff at risk. The UFT commends Assemblymembers Rivera and Peralta for addressing this crucial issue, and we look forward to working with them to help get these initiatives passed by the Legislature. We also would like to see continued funding of programs to teach students conflict resolution and alternatives to violence to help keep our schools safe.”

Fiscal Implications for State and Local Governments: Cost of signage.

Fighting Adolescent Gambling Addiction through School-based Curriculum

A recent study by the New York Council on Problem Gambling highlighted the need for gambling education in New York State:

While participation in all forms of gambling is illegal for individuals under the age of 18 in New York State, 86% of the New York adolescent respondents said that they had bet on one or more types of gambling at some time, 75% had gambled in the past year, and 15% had bet on one or more types of gambling on a weekly basis.

Despite restrictions on underage gambling in New York State, nearly one-third of the adolescent respondents have been able to purchase lottery tickets, 9% have been able to wager at horse or dog races, 6% have been able to participate in Quick Draw, and 5% have been able to gamble at a casino. Despite their substantially lower income, adolescents in New York report spending approximately one-third as much, on average, as adults report spending on all types of gambling.

There is concern that lottery gambling may be an experience that encourages young people to engage in other, less broadly sanctioned types of gambling as well as in other risk-taking behaviors, such as illicit drug use. A significant increase in lottery play by age was identified among New York adolescents.

While 20% of 13-year-olds in the sample have purchased lottery products in the past year, 36% of 17-year-olds have done so. The increase in lottery play is correlated with increases in other types of gambling and in the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana.

In New York, 2.4% ($\pm 1.09\%$) of the total sample of adolescent respondents were classified as problem gamblers, the most serious classification of gambling-related difficulties among youth. Another 14.0% ($\pm 2.05\%$) of the total sample of adolescent respondents were classified as gamblers at risk for developing gambling problems.

Based on the prevalence rates, it is estimated that there are between 15,400 and 41,000 adolescents in New York who have experienced severe problems with their gambling and between 135,000 and 193,000 whose gambling involvement has caused them difficulties in the past or, more likely, places them at risk for developing gambling-related difficulties in the future.

Problem gamblers are more likely than other adolescents who gamble to have problems with family members or friends due to gambling and to have had trouble at school or work due to their gambling. Problem gamblers are more likely than at-risk or non-problem gamblers to have shoplifted, sold drugs and engaged in other illegal activities to get money to gamble or to pay gambling debts.

Gambling involvement among adolescents in New York is correlated with alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use. Weekly gamblers are more likely than less-frequent gamblers to have ever tried alcohol, tobacco and marijuana and to have gotten into trouble in the past year because of their alcohol or drug use.

The Task Force strongly supports legislation it has introduced that would mandate the creation of an anti-gambling curriculum by the New York State Department of Education. The curriculum would be available to teachers throughout the state and to school administrators in their efforts to combat gambling behavior they observe in their students.

Fiscal Implications for State and Local Governments: None for state. For local school districts cost will vary based on use of curriculum.

Fighting to Improve Mental Health Services through Cultural Competence Training

The §5.07 Article of the Mental Hygiene Law (MHL) requires the NYS Office of Mental Health to submit five-year comprehensive plans regarding the provision of state and local mental health services. Such plans have included the development of best practices through centers of excellence. An area in critical need for the development of these clinical standards is cultural competence in mental health.

The Underserved Populations Subcommittee of the Mental Hygiene Task Force of the New York State Assembly Committee on Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, in *An Evaluation of the Delivery of Mental Hygiene Services in New York State*, February 2005, reported that cultural and linguistic barriers affect millions of New Yorkers, particularly in metropolitan areas.

According to the 2000 Census, minorities represent the majority (62%) of the NYC population (Hispanics – 27%; African Americans – 25%; and Asians – 10%). Forty-seven percent (47%) of New York City households speak a language other than English at home, and more than one-quarter of the City's residents are limited-English-proficient, meaning that they would not be able to undergo a psychiatric evaluation, crisis intervention, or counseling using English. Communities outside of New York City are experiencing similar difficulties.

The shortage of trained bilingual and bicultural counselors, therapists, psychiatrists and social workers makes it impossible for many limited-English-proficient New Yorkers to obtain referrals and timely, appropriate mental health services. It is clear that the proportion of mental health professionals who render services in a language other than English falls far short of current needs

and will constitute a critical service gap for many years to come. This situation is complicated by the absence of trained mental health interpreters in New York's clinics and hospitals. Stress and other negative predictors of mental health and substance abuse problems are consistently high within minorities, particularly immigrant populations. The lack of availability of adequate mental health services in languages other than English, coupled with under-utilization of available services by minorities resulting from fears, costs, and stigma, points to an area of fundamental need in New York.

Therefore, New York State must take a proactive role in overcoming these cultural and linguistic barriers by developing best practices in designated centers of excellence associated to the NYS OMH Psychiatric Institutes. These centers will require a demonstrated track record in education, research and delivery of culturally and linguistically competent services to minority populations. Through the cooperation with the two NYS OMH Psychiatric Institutes, consumers, family and community engagement, the centers of excellence will identify, assess the outcome, and disseminate the best practices of demonstrated behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally from the primary health care through inpatient psychiatric treatment.

This legislation would ensure the development of best and promising practices required to ensure the effective prevention and treatment of mental illness among underserved minorities in the State of New York.

Fiscal Implications for State: A state appropriation of \$2 million in fiscal year 2007-08 will establish the centers. Enabling legislation passed in 2006 but was vetoed by Governor George E. Pataki.

Fighting to Abolish the Discriminatory Practice of At-Large Elections

In an effort to ensure the voting rights of minorities throughout New York as their numbers continue to increase dramatically, the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force introduced legislation strongly supported by community leaders and civil rights activists. Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera and supporters stood in the rain and in front of a statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. earlier this year to unveil a proposal that would ban the use of at-large elections and force the 932 towns and 554 villages in the state to adopt modern district elections systems. The plan was unveiled on January 19th to coincide with the national observance of the life and work of the famed civil rights leader.

According to Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, "The federal lawsuit filed last month against the Westchester Village of Port Chester to ensure the voting rights of the thousands of Hispanics residing there has promoted state lawmakers, civil rights advocates and local residents to push for state action to resolve the problem. Federal courts throughout the nation have ruled in recent years that at-large elections systematically dilute the minority vote."

"We are gathered here today to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his quest for civil rights. His dream has not been forgotten. As generations change, new civil rights advocates carry his dream for equality; to end racial discrimination, to end segregation and to securing our voting rights," stated Cesar Riuz, chair of the Voting Rights Funds, a Village of Port Chester-based group advocating for election system changes throughout Westchester County. He continued, "Our journey is not a simple task, nor was Dr. King's. But the path for change is in our hands, to continue his dream. Thanks to leaders like Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, we are here to tell our lawmakers in Albany that we need total elections reform."

Angelo Falcon, director of the National Latino Policy Institute, stated, "New York continues to use an electoral system that time after time has been found by the courts to dilute the vote of minorities. Throughout this state, there are communities bursting at the seams because of the explosive growth of minority communities. To allow the present elections system to stand is to allow a discriminatory practice to continue. This is unacceptable."

Throughout the nation, minority communities, women and political minorities of all persuasions are under-represented in state and local elections. While the federal Voting Rights Act has provided a degree of relief to these communities, additional fair access to the ballot is needed, and states can strengthen the Voting Rights Act by enacting measures like the one introduced by Rivera.

The proposed law will expand the federal Voting Rights Act by forcing communities that continue to rely on at-large elections to adopt district or ward elections by the fall of 2009. This move alone will allow minority communities and all communities in areas that use at-large elections with greater access to the ballot, both as candidates for office and as voters. In addition, the legislation mandates the New York Department of State to assist all of the 932 towns and 554 villages with the technical needs to draw the new political lines.

According to Rivera, "This is a simple and practical solution and one that modernizes our elections system. Today, all municipalities have access to the technology to help them draw election districts for all their communities, therefore putting an end to back-room political dealings that run slates of good-old-buddies for elections that make a mockery of our democratic system."

Assemblyman Rivera said he will ask the Assembly Standing Committee on Elections and the Assembly Standing Committee on Local Governments to hold public hearings on this issue. "Those having their voting rights violated should not have to wait decades

for court reviews of elections systems that have failed to ensure their rights. We can and will act on this problem in a wholesale fashion.”

Fiscal Implications for State: None. Local governments will not have any fiscal impact either as the legislation will require them to use the resources of the Department of State to create district-based elections system.

Fighting to Lower Housing Costs & Build New Economies Via a Light Rail System

New York State’s economy is experiencing tremendous hardships. Working families, young adults and the middle class in general are experiencing tremendous increases in living costs. While the real estate and apartment rentals in New York City are seeing a substantial increase in valuation and rental costs continue to skyrocket, upstate communities near New York City are seeing population decline, and low levels of economic development.

In order to address these problems in a comprehensive new way, the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, under the leadership of Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, has introduced legislation that would begin the process of creating a light rail transportation system that would lower living costs in New York City and become an economic development engine for nearby upstate counties.

A light rail system connecting Orange and Sullivan Counties to New York City would be a tremendous boost to those economies, will reduce housing costs in New York City, stop the exodus of young people from upstate communities, will provide affordable housing choices to tens of thousands of New Yorkers,

will increase opportunities for first-time home buyers in those rural counties, will create a housing boom in those and surrounding counties, and will create new economies that will lower the cost of living in New York State for millions of our residents.

A light rail system promises tremendous benefits for the regions targeted, and a feasibility study on the economic impact of such a system needs to be undertaken.

Overseas, in both Europe and Asia, light rail systems with trains that travel at rapid speeds are being deployed with tremendous success. In Europe, these light rail systems have yielded tremendous benefits that also have environmental benefits for entire communities. From Korea to Turkey and Germany to Portugal, light rail systems have allowed those economies to grow, created new jobs, improved infrastructure, allowed rapid transit between suburban and urban centers, and helped lower living costs for their populations.

New York and the entire nation shamefully lags the rest of the developed world in utilizing light rail systems. The consequences of this failure are evident in the overcrowding we see in urban centers, the loss of population in rural communities, the high costs of housing and the demise of real estate values respectively, and the heavy reliance on automobiles that increase the polluting of our planet.

In combination, all these problems, created by the present outdated, inefficient and unaffordable transportation systems, contribute to the human and capital flight from New York we are witnessing.

A light rail system connecting communities that can be linked to New York City’s economic expansion will yield great opportunities for New Yorkers that range from affordable housing to job creation. New York must begin to actively pursue such models of efficient transportation to transform its economy and infrastructure into a system that will allow productivity and opportunity to thrive.

Under the present system, a relative few number of landlords are benefiting from a system of demand and supply that is making them obscenely wealthy at the cost of hard working families. It is time for a rethinking of how we create affordable housing and the studying of a light rail system's impact on such will help policymakers shape new housing, transportation, and economic policy that will reshape New York State.

Fiscal Implications for State: The legislation calls for a commission to study feasibility and economic impact of the creation of a light rail system. \$500,000 would be needed to begin the study.

Fighting to Help a Growing Elderly Population Access Adequate Health Services

Older adults with mental disorders are currently underserved and will become increasingly underserved as there is a rapid increase in the number of older adults in New York State. Existing services, workforce, governmental infrastructure, and state planning are inadequate to meet the special needs of this group.

For Hispanic elderly, the needs are just as great, as it is projected that by the year 2030 there will be over 13 million Hispanic elderly, constituting almost 16% of the nation's elderly population. In 1990, there were only 1.1 million Hispanics over the age of 65 in the United States.

Faced with major demographic changes and a lack of planning to address the mental health needs of an aging population, Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera introduced legislation strongly supported by the

Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force and dozens of mental health groups across the state. The legislation, which was signed into law in 2005, created the Geriatric Mental Health Act. It has been funded by an appropriation of \$2,000,000 but needs additional yearly funding to continue the important work the state must engage in to better serve our elderly.

The mental health system, which currently does not serve most older adults with mental illnesses at all, let alone serve them well, is in no way ready for the elder boom, which will hit in full force beginning in 2011. Perhaps it's not surprising that there has been so little preparation despite more than a decade of warnings. The big hit will come outside the ordinary five-year planning horizon. But the boom will be so large and will require such extensive restructuring, as well as growth, that preparation cannot responsibly be put off any longer.

Currently, there are an estimated 6 million American seniors with depression and only 10% of them are getting treatment. Untreated mental conditions can lead to disability, exacerbate symptoms of other illnesses, lead to premature death, and result in suicide. The suicide rate among elderly men is the highest among all age groups. The elderly are twice as likely to commit suicide as teenagers.

As the 78 million baby boomers retire, increased health care costs, including mental health care costs, will shift to the states. Currently, states provide mental health services through their state Medicaid match and through state general revenue-funded mental health programs for a variety of populations, including the elderly. In 2000, \$14 billion state dollars were spent on mental health services. The need for services is increasing daily.

Additional facts that support the need for this legislation are provided below:

- From 2000 to 2030 the population 65 or over in the United States will grow from 35 million to 70 million and from roughly 13% of Americans to 20%.

- From 2010 to 2020 the growth will be 35%, from approximately 40 million to 54 million.
- Based on current prevalence estimates, from 2000 to 2030 the number of older adults with mental illnesses will grow from approximately 7 million to approximately 14 million.
- Between 2010 and 2020 alone the number of older adults with mental illnesses will grow from approximately 8 million to approximately 11 million.
- During these same periods there will also be a significant increase in the proportion of minority older adults in the United States, rising from 16.5% of the elderly population in 2000 to 25.6% in 2030.

This act begins to remedy these shortcomings.

Fiscal Implications for State: The work required under the Geriatric Mental Health Act was funded by a \$2 million appropriation. Continued state funding is needed to comprehensively address the need for services.

Fighting to Improve Teacher Training & Improve Student Academic Achievement

The New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force strongly believes creative and new approaches are needed in the classroom to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. New York now spends almost \$50 billion per year on its K-12 system but has the highest dropout rates in the nation. It is clear that while adequate funding of education is essential to help students succeed, more must be done. The Task Force strongly supports the teaching of Social and Emotional Learning curriculum to both students and to teachers in training in our state's colleges and universities.

Most discussions about American education have focused on the academic performance of students. Yet an overlooked and perhaps more vital component of education is social and emotional learning (SEL). And, the statistics are dramatic: 15% to 22% of the nation's youth experience social, emotional, and mental health problems requiring treatment; 25% to 30% of American children experience school adjustment problems; and 14% of students 12-18 years of age report having been bullied at school in the past 6 months. A child who comes to school anxious, afraid, or alienated is a child whose ability to learn will be significantly diminished.

Thus, there is growing evidence that suggests that a key component in meeting educational goals for children and youth, academic as well as social, and helping all children reach their highest potential is social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults develop the skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, form positive relationships, and successfully handle the demands of growing up in today's complex society. Students of social and emotional learning have significantly better attendance records; their classroom behavior is more constructive and less often disruptive; they like school more; and they have better grade point averages. They are also less likely to be suspended or otherwise disciplined. Such proper classroom support can help close racial and economic achievement gaps.

This simple observation – that the children who are given clear behavioral standards and social skills, allowing them to feel safe, valued, confident and challenged, will exhibit better school behavior and learn more – is of monumental importance as we attempt to improve our state's public schools. We should not have to choose between academic achievement and the development of character. Rather, we should concentrate on both. The time has come to help restore balance to our state's classrooms and establish benchmarks for social and civic learning.

The government of Singapore prioritized social and emotional learning in their education system nationwide. Singapore students lead the world in technical brilliance – year after year they score at the top of international science and math competitions. Yet the international business community in Singapore complains that these same students are poor problem solvers, have difficulty coping with unexpected outcomes and set-backs, work poorly in the multi-racial work groups in which much of their work is carried out, and lack creativity. The Singapore Ministry of Education scoured the globe for solutions – and decided their students needed SEL.

In New York State, teachers, graduating and certified to teach, should be properly tooled to use and apply social and emotional learning.

Fiscal Implications for State: None.

“Unless we see a dramatic increase in the educational attainment—particularly college completion—we’re going to see a dramatic negative impact on the economy, especially in states with large Hispanic populations.”

White House

Fighting to Increase Hispanic Student Success in College & Reversing Economic Decay

Latino students are more likely than black and white students to attend public schools that have the most students, the highest concentration of low-income students, the highest student-teacher ratios, and are disproportionately taught by uncertified teachers. Simultaneously, the academic achievement gap has been widening. For those students that make it through secondary education and enter college an overwhelming array of barriers are encountered. With only 10 out of every 100 Hispanic students obtaining at least a bachelor’s degree, the challenges facing administrators attempting to remedy this situation are substantial. In addition, the lack of Hispanic faculty, administrators, staff and targeted programs to increase student success are evident throughout New York’s university systems. This problem is not trivial, as it impacts Hispanic communities, the state’s economy and the nation’s competitiveness internationally.

The problems created by the low levels of Hispanic academic achievement and educational attainment have reached a critical mass with dire consequences. Hispanics are no longer a small minority relegated to the margins of society. The explosive growth of Hispanics in New York and throughout the nation demands serious policy changes that will ensure academic success. For as the Hispanic communities go, so does the nation. In fact, White House policy analysts have concluded that, “Unless we see a dramatic increase in the educational attainment – particularly college completion – we’re going to see a dramatic negative impact on the economy, especially in states with large Hispanic populations.” The problem does have solutions that are being implemented piecemeal throughout the country.

In New York, some initiatives that can help Latino students are underway but need considerable funding and more attention by state leaders. Successful programs in other states; those that are increasing Hispanic student academic achievement and educational attainment, helping them access graduate and post graduate degrees, and professional training, can be emulated in New York.

State University of New York Chancellor John Ryan and City University of New York Chancellor Matthew Goldstein have focused attention on the problem throughout their systems but state funding is needed to initiate programs that will begin to increase graduation rates and academic achievement.

The New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, under the leadership of Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, has engaged this problem through fact-finding visits to other states, extended dialogue and collaboration with high level staffs at both SUNY and CUNY, and has issued two reports on the problem. One documents the dangerous economic impact the current condition will have on the New York State economy. The second report is a comprehensive outline of the programs that need to be in place on SUNY and CUNY campuses to ensure student success. Those reports can be found on the Assembly's web site, under the Rivera link or at www.somosefuturo.org

Fiscal Implications for State: An initial appropriation of \$5 million is needed to create an office of the Vice Provost for Diversity and Multi-Cultural Affairs. An additional \$15 million will be needed to launch and operate track-proven programs that increase student success rates.

Fighting to Improve Other Major Issues Facing Hispanics

1 Fighting Government Limits on Medication Available to the Poor & Disabled

"There is strong opposition to continued attempts to implement and expand a preferred drug list and a prior authorization of pharmaceuticals bureaucracy as a management strategy for the Medicaid program. Much of this opposition has been created due to legitimate concerns over the well being of New Yorkers dependent on Medicaid for their medical needs," stated Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, Chairman of the New York State Assembly Mental Health Committee.

The proposal to create a large bureaucracy within the Department of Health that will tell physicians whether or not they can prescribe certain medications to treat their patients is a scary scenario. Doctors are dealing with life-and-death situations and now will need to make a toll-free call to have their decisions second guessed. The Task Force and most African-American and women legislators have worked to stop this proposal.

Armed with studies from respected think-tanks like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Task Force members and Latino health advocates believe Pataki's proposals will be another impediment to health care access.

- According to a study published last year, the present problem of communication between patient and health care providers is so great that one in five Spanish speaking patients has not pursued care when needed due to the language barrier.

“We are kidding ourselves if we think that the creation of preferred drug lists and a physician call-in system to get prescription approvals will not worsen this terrible situation,” declared Rivera.

Most recently, another report on Hispanic health disparities has helped to increase public health policy attention on this important issue. In the face of such research documenting the health needs of Hispanics, the proposal to create a drug list that will limit access to life-saving medicine needs to be questioned and stopped.

- ❑ It is now well understood that genetic variations affect Hispanics and may require dosage adjustments to achieve an optimal therapeutic effect. Failure to recognize an individual who is a fast or slow metabolizer of a drug, and to adjust the dosage accordingly, can potentially result in therapeutic failure, increased side effects, or toxicity.
- ❑ A preferred drug list and prior authorization process hinders a doctor’s ability to use his scientific training and advances in medicine to provide the best possible health outcome for his or her patient.

A report by the National Alliance for Hispanic Health and the National Pharmaceutical Council titled *Genes, Culture and Medicines: Bridging Gaps in Treatment for Hispanic Americans*,” shows a growing body of scientific research demonstrating substantial disparities in pharmaceutical therapy for Hispanic Americans. Hispanics are less likely to receive or use medications for asthma, cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, or pain as well as prescription medications in general. These disparities in pharmaceutical treatment are substantial and often persist even after adjustment for differences in income, age, insurance coverage, and coexisting medical conditions.”

The following are some of the findings of the report:

- ❑ Hispanics have less access to medications.

Hispanics are less likely than the majority population to receive or use needed medications, including drugs for asthma; cardiovascular disease; HIV/AIDS; mental illness; or pain due to fractures, surgery, and cancer.

- ❑ Advances in medications are less likely to reach Hispanics.

Research suggests that Hispanics may receive fewer state-of-the-art medications. For example:

- Hispanics in a Medicaid population received fewer of the more effective second-generation antipsychotic agents compared with non-Hispanic whites.
- Hispanic children in a variety of health care settings received fewer inhaled steroids and were less likely to be prescribed a nebulizer for home use than white children.
- ❑ Genetic and other factors influence medication effectiveness for Hispanics.

Hispanics can differ from other populations in their capacity to metabolize certain drugs. These differences may be due to variation in genes regulating drug metabolism, environmental factors, or their interaction. Such differences can result in higher or lower levels of drugs in the bloodstream. If genetic or other factors suggest that a patient may be a slow or ultrarapid metabolizer of a given drug, appropriate adjustments to the patient’s therapy should be considered that may yield better outcomes.

- ❑ Optimal dosages vary for Hispanic populations.

Hispanics may require dosage adjustments to achieve optimal therapeutic levels. For example:

- Some Hispanic subgroups may require lower doses of antidepressants and may be more prone to increased side effects at normal doses of these agents.

- Hispanics tend to respond to lower doses of some antipsychotic medications. In one study, the average therapeutic dose for Hispanics was half the dose commonly given to Caucasians or African Americans.
- Lower dosages of midazolam and nifedipine are commonly used in Mexico.

Based on this type of information and with their first-hand knowledge of other disparities in health care access and services facing Hispanics, the Task Force has strongly opposed the creation of any mechanism to restrict access to medication for the elderly, the poor and the disabled in New York State, the overwhelming number being women and children.

2 Fighting Anti-Consumer Practices that Limit Opportunity

New Yorkers fighting to make ends meet and working to stretch their limited income to cover their household and family expenses are under attack by banking and insurance companies that have devised sophisticated schemes that are ripping off consumers. The Task Force has introduced legislation to stop these anti-consumer practices, has held public hearings to raise public awareness, and has worked with news organizations around the state to help raise support to ban these practices.

Specifically, banking firms, insurance companies and utility service providers have begun to compile intricate personal financial data on consumers, which in turn is used to charge New Yorkers more money for credit, insurance coverage for their homes and automobiles, and secure substantial deposits before utility services are provided.

These actions amount to a stranglehold on consumers. Of particular importance is the impact of these schemes on New York's huge immigrant community and their ability for upward mobility in our society. Never before have Americans been subject to such business tactics that will permanently and negatively impact their financial stability and future economic opportunities for their families.

- ❑ Hispanics and other immigrant groups with limited credit history, working in low-wage jobs, living in old and troubled housing, and having debt are now at a tremendous disadvantage in accessing affordable insurance for their homes and automobiles, credit cards with decent rates and eventually securing utility services.
- ❑ These practices are commonly known as "credit scoring," "universal default," and "utility prepayment plans" and in combination have a tremendously negative impact on the poor, working poor, young adults, and single women with children in our society.
- ❑ In 1999 one-quarter (25%) of Hispanic families with children were poor, and the share of the nation's poor families with children that is Latino rose from 20.2% in 1992 to 25.9% in 1999. This means that while Hispanic families have benefited from the economic expansion, many have had a more difficult time moving out of poverty than other American families.
- ❑ Strategies used by and available to other poor groups in paying their living expenses in the United States are now being turned against poor Hispanics. Paying a utility bill late for the sake of putting food on the table or attending to a medical emergency is now the excuse by which corporations will require them to pay more for credit, insurance, and other financial services.

3 Less Diversity in the Legal Profession: The Raising of the Bar Exam Passing Score

In 2005, the bar exam passing score was raised by the Board of Law Examiners, but not without a fight by advocates for diversity in the cadre of attorneys in New York. The executive members of the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force expressed their deep-seated concern with and objection to the Board of Law Examiners' proposal to increase the passing score of the New York State bar examination.

The Task Force was concerned that hearings on the proposal to raise the passing score were held in three cities on relatively short notice and without official notice or notice calculated to inform the general public, including the constituents of the Task Force, about this issue, which potentially could have a great impact on them and their ability to access legal services.

We further understand that the Board gave assurances that it would schedule an additional day or days of hearings at some later time to solicit additional public input. The Task Force formally asked the Board to schedule that hearing and afford the public the opportunity to be heard and to make all efforts possible to adequately publicize those hearings. The Board declined both requests.

Task Force members formally objected to the Board of Law Examiners' proposal to increase the passing score of the New York State bar examination because:

- ❑ There is no evidence that the quality of the bar has declined, or that lawyers who are currently passing the bar are any less competent than those who have been admitted under the same passing score for more than two decades.
- ❑ Absent any such evidence, there can be no justification for a score increase, which will delay or prevent hundreds and potentially thousands of successful law school graduates from entering the profession, graduates who would have been admitted under the scoring regimen that has been in place for 23 years.

Especially important to the Task Force is the negative impact that such an increase will have on the large, ever-increasing Hispanic population in New York. Despite the Board's confirmed unwillingness to collect racial/ethnic data (in direct contradiction to the strong recommendation in the 1991 Report of the New York Judicial Commission on Minorities) there is substantial evidence that the bar exam already has an unacceptable disparate impact on minority applicants, including Hispanic applicants, and that any increase

in the passing score will necessarily further decrease the number of minority applicants who will pass the bar exam on first taking.

Given that the bar is still far from reflecting the diversity of our State's population, this is an unacceptable result as a matter of public policy.

- ❑ We should be seeking every means possible to increase the number of Hispanic lawyers, as well as representatives of other minority groups, rather than acting to decrease their already insufficient number. The Board's actions are likely to discourage Hispanic college graduates from pursuing a legal education.
- ❑ Continuation of a bar that lacks the diversity of the populace will also have serious and negative consequences for communities that are already under-served and which lack access to justice. A system is needed that will increase, not decrease, the number of minority lawyers.

While the decision to raise the passing score on the bar examination has already been made, the Task Force will continue to work to ensure fair representation on the bar from the many communities that have a stake in this issue.

4 Asthma and School Bus Pollution: A Troubling Disease Made Worse by Government Inaction

At the request of the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, a four committee joint public hearing on the issue of school buses, diesel exhaust and its health threat to children was held in New York City.

Of particular concern to the Task Force is the mounting evidence that diesel exhaust is a direct cause of a variety of respiratory ailments, posing even higher risks for children and other sensitive populations.

“It is appalling that while we have the technology to reduce the level of pollution our children are exposed to, that while we have the scientific data to prove the harm diesel fuel is causing our children, and that while the State has made millions of dollars available to help reduce the harm, we have bus company operators and the NYC Board of Education sitting on their hands on this issue.”

Peter M. Rivera

Early last year, it was documented that children in Harlem, New York, have the highest rates of asthma in the nation. Other low-income communities around the state, including the South Bronx, have similar problems and school buses are a leading cause of air pollution in many of these communities.

In December of 2001 the New York Power Authority agreed to pay for the retrofitting of 1000 New York City school buses with diesel particulate filters, which would reduce emissions significantly. The initiative focuses on school buses in all boroughs except Manhattan. After two years, however, only one school bus company has taken advantage of the this offer. Less than 24 buses have installed the filters.

There are over 55,000 school buses in New York State and over 2 million children ride these buses everyday to school and back home. Many of these children sit in these buses for extended periods of time. Others are exposed to diesel exhaust from parked and idling buses in crowded areas. New York City alone has over 5,000 school buses.

In light of the scientific evidence of harm that diesel exhaust causes and in light of the high rate of respiratory diseases impacting our children and many others in our communities, the Task Force finds the lack of initiative demonstrated by school bus companies to help control this problem and the lack of action by the New York City Board of Education an issue that should be examined by the New York State Legislature and needs further action by the Task Force.

Diesel exhaust is a mixture of smog-forming pollutants, particulate matter (or soot), and other toxic constituents such as arsenic, cadmium, dioxin, and mercury. Small enough to be inhaled deep into the lungs, diesel exhaust particles can cause or exacerbate a wide variety of health problems, including asthma and other respiratory ailments, and have been linked to cancer and premature death. The public health threat from diesel school bus emissions is threefold:

- ❑ **Air Toxins.** Diesel exhaust contains 41 chemicals that the State of California has identified as toxic air contaminants.
- ❑ **Soot.** Most particle matter emitted by diesel buses is tiny enough to evade the body’s defenses and lodge deep in the lungs. Numerous public health studies have linked diesel soot to missed school days, asthma hospitalizations, chronic bronchitis, pneumonia, heart disease, and even premature death.
- ❑ **Smog.** Urban ozone, or smog, impairs the respiratory system, causing coughing, choking, and reduced lung capacity. On smoggy days, hospital admissions, especially for asthma, escalate. Repeated exposure to smog may permanently injure lungs.

A University of California Berkeley School of Public Health study estimated that children’s exposure to diesel fumes within school buses poses as much as 23 to 46 times the cancer risk considered significant under federal law.

5 New Voting Technology and Rules: A Time for Vigilance in Order to Protect the Hispanic Vote and our Democracy

A Yale University study found that particulate pollution in school buses is 5 to 15 times higher than on nearby streets. Diesel particle pollution increases the risk of allergies and asthma in children. In many urban areas, asthma is the number one cause of school absenteeism.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, New York City has some of the worst air in the country. New Yorkers, poor New Yorkers especially, have some of the highest rates of asthma and other lung disorders. It may not be direct cause and effect, but links are obvious.

The culprits are numerous and diffuse. High-particulate emissions, most notably by cars, trucks and diesel fuel are a large part of the problem. Power plants, particularly the old "dirty" ones, are also to blame.

As another school year comes to an end, the Task Force believes that this issue needs further investigation, legislative action and public attention.

In conjunction with the Assembly Education Committee, the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee, and the Assembly Transportation Committee, the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force will continue to examine ways to better protect the more than 2 million New York children that use school buses everyday.

- With a projected 50% increase in the demand for energy in New York City and the need to build additional power producing plants, the issue of air pollution and its impact on minority communities will become a bigger problem. The building of new power producing plants in densely populated urban areas highlights the need to find sources of revenue to fund emissions reducing strategies and for strictly enforcing environmental laws.

In a December 2003 letter delivered to the New York State Board of Elections, the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force outlined a list of concerns with New York State's lack of action in designing and implementing new voting requirements mandated by the federal government.

New York State has missed a very important deadline under the Help America Vote Act. As of December 31, 2003, New York State needed to have in place a voter database that would serve as the foundation for other important federally mandated requirements this state must meet in order to receive hundreds of millions of dollars to update its antiquated voting technology and procedures.

In addition to missing this deadline, the Board of Election's prioritization and urgency to meet other requirements is unclear to many elected officials and good government groups throughout this state.

The Task Force is extremely troubled by the snail-paced movement that the Board of Elections has established as its behavior with such an important issue.

As other deadlines loom, the Task Force is concerned that haste will lead to bad decisions. Voters in this state should not have to bear the consequences of ill-formed processes and inadequate technology choices that will impact their ability to vote and the reliability of the recording of their vote.

It is most important that the Board of Elections moves to remedy its inaction in a manner that will provide the voters of this state with the confidence that our democracy is not being undermined. Therefore, it is imperative that the Board of Elections select processes and technology that will be auditable and that will be operated under the daily management of government, not outside contractors.

“Voters in this state should not have to bear the consequences of ill-formed processes and inadequate technology choices that will impact their ability to vote and the reliability of the recording of their vote.”

Peter M. Rivera

In seeking private sector input in the creation of database software and new voting technology, the Board of Elections must hold true to its mission of “preserving citizen confidence in the democratic process and enhancement of voter participation in elections.”

“The work of the Board of Elections and the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles on this issue is under a microscope and the founding principles that have allowed this great nation to endure are at stake,” stated the Task Force correspondence to the Commissioner of the New York State Board of Elections.

“It is the plan and the duty of Task Force members to uphold those principles for this and future generations in the communities we represent,” continued the letter.

Earlier this year, the heads of the Board of Elections and the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles met with the entire Task Force to address concerns on:

- Under federal law, the Department of Motor Vehicles is responsible for verifying voter identification by establishing and verifying procedures with the Social Security Administration. The list of eligible voters in New York State will be produced in great part through the work of the DMV.

The Task Force sought answers to the following important and yet to be answered questions:

Important Questions Regarding Identification:

- What forms of identification can be used to prove one’s identity when registering to vote?
- What is being implemented for citizens of New York who wish to vote, but do not have either a driver’s license or social security number?
- If a registrant fails to provide proper identification, the state must assign a unique number to identify the voter for registration purposes.
- How is this unique number formulated?
- Who formulates this number in the state?
- Who verifies these numbers once they are implemented?
- Who verifies them for errors and false identities?
- How does a voter know they will need such a number to vote?

Important Questions Regarding First Time Voters:

- Who is entitled to vote?
- What are the requirements?
- Can you please explain to us the identification procedures for first time voters who vote by mail after January 1, 2003, but have not voted previously in a federal election in the State?
- What forms of identification are needed for first time voters?

Important Questions Regarding the Voter Registration Database:

- Has a statewide voter database been implemented yet?
- What does this database consist of?

According to the New York State Citizen’s Coalition on HAVA implementation, Department of Motor Vehicles was supposed to meet with the Chief State

Election Official (BOE) to enter in an agreement to match information in the database to verify the accuracy of the information provided on applications for voter registration.

- Has this meeting taken place?
- What solution has come about?
- In addition, New York must enter into an agreement with the United States Social Security Commissioner for the purpose of verifying applicable information regarding registration verification?
- What is the status of this requirement?

Important Questions Regarding Language Assistance:

- How is the state implementing language assistance to non-English voters?
- Will ballots be available in different language formats?
- Will the new voting machines be accessible in multiple languages?
- Will there be election staff at the polls that can provide language assistance?

Important Questions Regarding Voting Machines:

- Has the state decided on the type of technology it wishes to use to replace our old and outdated voting machines?
- We understand that there are types of computer technology to be considered. Has a technology been chosen?
- In today's society of computer technology, there are many ways in which security can be broken and data may be altered:
 - What is the state doing to implement security measures for new technology chosen?
 - What measures are taking shape to ensure an accurate vote count and prevent tampering with new voting technology adopted?
 - Will these machines leave a paper trail for error proofing and auditing?

- What is the State going to do to provide a proper and adequate staff to help educate voters on new processes and technology?

Important Questions Regarding Voters with Disabilities:

- What is being implemented to help voters with disabilities cast their votes?
- Are accessible devices being implemented to aid voters with disabilities?

6 School Drop Out Rates: The Hemorrhaging of Hispanic Students Due to Failed Education Policy

The Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force has urged additional funding in the education budget in order to address the soaring dropout rates for Hispanic students, including students who are limited English proficient or English Language Learners (ELLs).

This situation is reaching a crisis situation as the State implements new, high standards prior to the vast majority of middle and high schools serving Hispanic and other immigrant students being able to make the transition and acclimate to their new lives in New York State.

- Schools need to have had reasonable time to make the improvements needed to help these students succeed.

The four-year dropout rate for ELLs is over 30% and for Hispanic students over 25%, and as many students remain in high school beyond four years.

The dropout rate for ELLs and Hispanics is projected to reach 50%. High schools are also pushing out tens of thousands of students.

- A recent report by Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum found that over 150,000 students were discharged from the New York City high schools over the

past three years. Many of these students were illegally discharged, while others were pushed into GED programs.

- ❑ In addition, new research is now indicating that 1 in 3 Hispanic women does not finish high school. These are community-destroying trends with larger implications for our state.

The Task Force believes it is critical for the Assembly to include targeted funding for a new initiative to address this crisis situation.

Academics studying this problem have warned that the dropout rates and impact on entire communities is reaching a critical mass. They believe that the overwhelming number of students leaving school and the negative social and economic impact on society is reaching a point where, no matter how much funding is provided, there will be no return from this abyss.

This problem, if allowed to stand, is relegating huge numbers of people and communities in our state to a life of poverty and social dysfunction. Our state does not need to become the incubator to such problems.

- ❑ The Task Force has supported a new \$25 million initiative to ensure that all at-risk students, including Hispanic and ELL students, and other at-risk students in middle and high school are provided an extended day and/or week-end classes to give them the extra time they need to meet the standards.

The extra twenty minutes of schooling being provided in New York City schools is not sufficient to address the additional needs of ELLs who need to become proficient in English as well as master the other core subjects.

This funding should also be used to provide additional incentives to address the systemic shortage of certified bilingual and ESL teachers and to create a Summer Teacher Institute to provide additional training for teachers in our failing schools.

- ❑ The members of the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force want to support the State's new standards, but it is clear that thousands of Hispanic and other immigrant and minority students are not succeeding. If we are to continue to support the State's new standards, it is imperative that we address the thousands of students who are failing.

- ❑ The Task Force recognizes the fiscal crisis facing the state and the need to address the Governor's proposed cuts in education, but we believe it is critically important to address the crisis situation of thousands of Hispanic and other immigrant students failing under the new standards.

- ❑ The Task Force strongly believes that immediate attention should be focused on this problem and that resources should be directly targeted to education and educator enhancement programs.

The Task Force also believes the mentioned proposals will have a positive impact on this worsening problem, it will improve the education of thousands of children, will strengthen communities, and place New York State as a leader in addressing this daunting problem affecting the entire nation.

- ❑ The Task Force also supports legislation that waives the English Regents requirement for high school graduation for students that have been in the United States for less than five years, as long as other graduation requirements are met.

This is an important first step for New York to take if it is serious about making fundamental changes to a system that is presently hindering, in alarming numbers, the ability of young and bright students from entering the American mainstream.

- ❑ The Task Force believes this is a basic issue of justice that needs to be addressed this legislative session.

The Task Force has worked to stress the political importance of reaching out to New York’s growing immigrant population, as more and more immigrants become citizens and register to vote.

7 A Focus on Immigration: The Changing Face of New York Creates New Challenges

The Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, the New York State Assembly Black, Puerto Rican and Hispanic Caucus, and the Task Force on New Americans support an array of budgetary initiatives to address the critical needs of New York State’s growing immigrant population.

New York State has been transformed by high levels of immigration over the last 25 years. Nearly two-thirds of New York City’s population and one-third of the State’s population are made up of immigrants and their children. Furthermore, the ratio of immigrants to native-born New Yorkers is projected to continue increasing throughout the first decade of the 21st Century. Consequently, the very future of New York depends on how well our newest New Yorkers are able to integrate socially and economically into our society.

- ❑ A recent report by the New School, “Hardship in Many Languages—Immigrant Families and Children in NYC,” documents the needs of immigrants. According to statistics, 40% of recent immigrants are poor, twice as high as the general population.
- ❑ Limited ability to speak English is linked with high rates of poverty. There are over one million New Yorkers considered to be Limited English Proficient (LEP). In addition, LEP students have the highest dropout rates of all students—50% of LEP students in the Class of 2000 dropped out or were pushed out of school.

The Task Force has worked to stress the political importance of reaching out to New York’s growing immigrant population, as more and more immigrants become citizens and register to vote.

- ❑ The New York Immigration Coalition and its member organizations operate the largest voter registration effort in the country. Well over 200,000 new citizens registered to vote in New York City and the surrounding counties in the past 4 years.
- ❑ A Columbia University study found that 60% of new voters in 2002 in New York City were foreign born.
- ❑ Former Governor Pataki had been reaching out to these new voters, and it is important that the traditional advocates for immigrant groups continue to affirm their concern with the issues important to these new Americans.

The Task Force recognizes the fiscal constraints that we are operating under, but we urge your full support for the following budgetary initiatives:

Immigrant Integration Services Initiative

- Establish a “Welcome to New York” initiative for new immigrants. Provide \$3 million in funding to community-based organizations to provide beginner English/civics classes, assistance with immigration requirements, job referrals and other services needed to assist newcomers to integrate successfully.

Citizenship Services

- Fund citizenship services at \$3.5 million, a \$1 million increase. The additional funding is needed to “revamp” classes for new citizenship tests and to comply with more extensive and timely application process.

Legal Services for Immigrants

- Provide \$1 million for grants to not-for-profit agencies to provide immigrant-related legal services on a sliding fee scale.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Programs

- TANF funding for ESOL services should be restored to the \$5 million level that had previously been included by the Assembly majority in the state budget.
- Restore funding for the Employment Preparation Education Aid to the 2002-2003 level of \$96 million and permit not-for-profit agencies to provide ESL and basic education classes.

Ensuring Access to Health Care

- Provide Medicaid funding and HCRA funds for language access programs to increase interpreting capacity at hospitals.
- Establish scholarships and educational incentives to increase the opportunity for bi-lingual, bi-cultural individuals to enter the health and mental health professions.

Restoring Access to the Safety Net

- Expand the state Food Assistance Program to cover all elderly and disabled legal immigrants who would be eligible for federal Food Stamps, if not for their immigration status or date of arrival. Eliminate the county option and make the program uniform statewide.

Improving the Education System for Newcomers

- Create and fund a \$10 million Dropout Prevention Initiative to address the growing dropout rate crisis for students with an interrupted formal education (SIFE) by providing small class size, extended school day and week-end classes, and tutoring as mandatory academic intervention services.
- Include \$5 million additional funding in the bilingual grants program to enable school districts to hire interpreters for key parent-teacher activities and to pay for the translation of relevant school materials for parents.

Mental Health

- Create and fund a \$2 million pilot project to increase access to mental health services for immigrants by providing community-based outreach and mental health services.

“State action is needed that will strengthen banking services for immigrants and prevent practices that drive immigrants to use underground and unscrupulous financial systems.”

Peter M. Rivera

8 Banking and Remittance Issues: Predatory Practices and Lack of Access to Financial Services Plague Immigrants

The Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force joined the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs efforts to prevent unscrupulous business practices by money transmitting agencies (remittance

agencies) when it participated in a public hearing along with the New York State Assembly Committee on Banks, the Assembly Committee on Consumer Protection, and the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs.

At the public hearing a study was released that detailed the finding of an official investigation on nontraditional and predatory financial services being used by immigrants.

The Task Force believes that it is important to examine whether state legislation is needed to protect the public from unscrupulous money remittance services used by thousands of immigrants.

The Task Force believes that allowing the use of foreign-issued identification, such as the matricula consular, issued by the Mexican and Dominican Republic governments, for opening banking accounts is essential to both immigrants and financial institutions serving minority communities.

- ❑ In general, bank accounts help customers build assets and avoid high-cost financial services, such as check cashiers, payday lenders, couriers, and money transmitters.

The money transfer industry in New York State is an important vehicle for consumers to wire money overseas. The industry has grown to approximately \$3 billion annually, and because of the role these establishments play, it is imperative that consumers who use these services be informed of fees, exchange rates, and all costs associated with the transmission of their money.

- ❑ Currently that is not the standard practice and consumers are paying a high price for lack of State action on this issue.
- ❑ The Task Force believes that the piecemeal approach by New York's banking and financial sectors in allowing the use of foreign-issued identification as proof of identity for customers

wishing to establish financial accounts in banks, savings associations, and credit unions is a considerable problem.

- ❑ When immigrants are able to use well-established banking services to conduct their finances, chances are they will not be taken advantage of.
- ❑ The Task Force believes that the State is turning a blind eye to unscrupulous business practices that are used to prey on the immigrant community in New York State.

Presently, several banks throughout New York are allowing the use of foreign identification documents as proof of identity by potential customers.

- ❑ Most recently, City & Suburban Federal Savings Bank in Yonkers has joined Fleet and Banco Popular in accepting Mexican government-issued identification cards. In addition, over 800 law enforcement agencies in several states also accept the Mexican issued matricula consular as a valid ID.

According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, an estimated \$13 billion in remittances will be sent to Mexico by Mexicans living in the United States. In 2001 remittances equaled 9.3% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Dominican Republic, 13.5% of the GDP of Jamaica and 16.2% of the GDP of Nicaragua.

- ❑ New York State's large immigrant communities use remittance services on a regular basis to support families in their countries of origin.

The Task Force supports legislation that would require banks operating in New York State to allow the matricula consular as a valid proof of identification by potential customers.

The Task Force will continue to advocate for a uniform standard for allowing all banks to accept this type of identification. Immigrants unable to access credible banking services are prime targets

for criminal activity and are forced to access black market services. These scenarios are unacceptable in today's economy.

9 Workplace Bias Against Women: Wage Disparities for Same Work as Men Is an Economic and Social Injustice

The Task Force continues to support legislation designed to prevent wage discrimination. It also believes that all New Yorkers deserve to be fairly compensated for their work—regardless of their gender.

- ❑ It is hard to imagine that, even in 2002, women still earned less than 73 cents for every dollar earned by men.

In New York, the typical working woman brings home \$118 less per week than a man. That's a significant amount of money that could go towards bills, rent and any number of other things.

The Task Force believes now is the time that the playing field must be leveled to end this discriminatory practice.

Wage discrimination has undermined opportunities for many of New York's hardest workers for far too long.

- ❑ Current research has uncovered tremendous wage bias as it relates to Hispanic women.
- ❑ It has now been documented that Hispanic women earn only 52 cents for every dollar a white male makes in a similar job and with similar education.
- ❑ With a large number of Hispanic households being headed by single mothers, wage bias has a devastating impact on Hispanic families and is a primary cause of poverty in the Hispanic community.

The Task Force continues to urge the New York State Senate and governor to join us this year to advance this legislation and put an end to work-related discrimination.

- ❑ According to a study conducted in 2000 by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research, American working families lose an estimated \$200 billion annually as a result of the wage gap.
- ❑ That translates into an average income loss of \$4,000 for working families every year.

To remedy discriminatory salary practices, legislation has been introduced that would amend the state Constitution and Labor Law to provide pay equity for all people who perform work of comparable skill, effort and responsibility.

Current research has uncovered tremendous wage bias as it relates to Hispanic women. It has now been documented that Hispanic women earn only 52 cents for every dollar a white male makes in a similar job and with similar education.

Additional information on the ongoing work of the Task Force can be found on the following web sites:

- www.somosefuturo.org
- www.assembly.state.ny.us

2007-2008

Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force
Priority Legislation

More Task Force priority legislation is outlined on the following spreadsheet.

Task Force Priority Legislation

2007 Bill	Introduced by	Affects Sections of the Law	Referred to Committee	Description	Status
A .2249	Felix Ortiz	Aging Law	Aging	Increases the access of pharmaceuticals for needy senior citizens and the disabled by creating a Medicaid Rx Senior Eligibility Expansion Program	In Committee
A. 1687	Peter M. Rivera	Penal Law and Criminal Procedure Law	Codes	Provides for the imposition of an additional determinate sentence of imprisonment for the commission of a felony as part of a street gang	In Committee
2005 Law	Ruben Diaz Jr.	Agriculture and Markets Law, Executive Law and the Administrative Code of the City of New York	Agriculture	Protects the public from dog attacks by increasing penalties on owners of dangerous dogs that cause serious physical injury, providing for restitution to victims of such attacks, and allowing restrictions on the ownership of dogs or the presence of dogs in the residence of a parolee	Became Law in 2005
A. 3775	Peter M. Rivera	Banking Law	Banks	Requires banks to accept the matricula consular identification card issued by the Mexican Consulate General as valid identification for all banking transactions	In Committee
A. 58	Ivan C. Lafayette	Penal Law	Codes	Punishes unlawful procurement of clients, patients or customers by 1-4 years in jail and/or \$5,000	In Committee
A .3770	Felix Ortiz	Penal Law	Codes	Decreases the number of firearms necessary for conviction of criminal sale of a firearm	In Committee
2006 Law	Phil Ramos	Penal Law	Codes	Authorizes police departments to which weapons are surrendered to destroy these weapons after one year if left unclaimed	Became Law in 2006
A. 4366	Ivan C. Lafayette	Public Health Law	Codes	Mandates that the cost of pharmaceutical drugs in N.Y. state be no more expensive than any other location where such drugs could be purchased	In Committee
A. 7122	Joseph R. Lentol	New York City Administrative Code	Cities	To prevent the dishonest practices of predatory real estate developers and over-saturation of transitional homeless facilities	Passed Assembly
A. 4734	Peter M. Rivera	Public Health Law, Education Law, Insurance Law	Health	Authorizes the prescription and dispensing of a 3 month supply of a drug or controlled substance when such drug or substance is used to treat or alleviate a chronic illness or condition that has been designated by the commissioner of health	In Committee
A. 5325	Peter M. Rivera	General Business Law	Consumer Affairs and Protection	Prohibits credit card issuers from increasing the interest rates they charge on their credit cards, based on irrelevant financial activity of the credit card holder	Vetoed by the Governor
A.6732	Peter M. Rivera	Public Service Law	Corporations, Authorities & Commissions	Establishes a citizens' committee on cable television prior to granting or renewing a cable television franchise by a municipality	In Committee
A.385	Aurelia Greene	Education Law	Education	Requires school health service aides in New York city public schools	In Committee
A. 6636	Carl Heastie	Education Law	Education	Protects children in N.Y. city from child abuse and maltreatment in educational settings	In Committee
A.3826	Felix Ortiz	Education Law	Education	Requires a risk analysis for diabetes and tests for all children admitted to public schools only if necessary	In Committee

2007 Bill	Introduced by	Affects Sections of the Law	Referred to Committee	Description	Status
A 2369	Catherine Nolan	Education Law	Education	Provides certification of privately funded English as a second language schools	In Committee
A. 5546	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Education	Establishes a bilingual toll-free school safety hotline to operate 24 hours a day	In Committee
A 6556	Jose Rivera	Education Law	Education	Provides supplemental instructional after school programs for pupils of limited English proficiency	In Committee
A 4628	Adriano Espaillat	Education Law	Education	Provides for the inclusion in school safety plans for the installation of entry door alarms and intruder detection systems for high schools in NYC	Held in Committee
A 4630	Adriano Espaillat	Education Law	Education	Requires children entering school to furnish a dental health certificate	In Committee
A.4203	Phil Ramos	Education Law	Education	Provides availability of adequate supplies for left-handed students	In Committee
A.6733	Peter M. Rivera		Education	Authorizes and directs the Board of Regents and the Education Department to waive the requirement of passing the English language arts Regents examination for the awarding of a local high school diploma to English language learners	In Committee
A.6128	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Education	Requires secondary schools to include within their health education course the medical and legal ramifications of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use during pregnancy	In Committee
A.5956	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Education	Establishes the single gender core course academies demonstration program	In Committee
A.4635	Vito J. Lopez	Education Law	Elections Law	Extends the right to vote in all elections to aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States.	In Committee
A.2169	Sam Hoyt		Energy	Provides TANF heating assistance program to low income families	In Committee
A.3670	Joseph R. Lentol	Environmental Conservation Law	Environmental Conservation	Requires the department of conservation to give notice of administrative order on consent no less than 15 days after an order is proposed	Passed Assembly
A.4226	Phil Ramos	Environmental Conservation Law	Environmental Conservation	Includes certain conditions in operating permits issued to sources subject to the federal Clean Air Act	In Committee
A.6607	Felix Ortiz	Executive Law	Governmental Operations	Enacts the bilingual services act to provide effective communication between all levels of government and people of the state who provide public services	In Committee
A .1684	Jose R. Peralta	Executive Law	Governmental Operations	Establishes equal access to health and human services for limited English speaking individuals, etc.	In Committee
A.6944	Ruben Diaz Jr.	Executive Law and The Agriculture and Markets Law	Governmental Operations	Makes victims of certain dog attacks eligible for awards by the crime victims' board	In Committee
A.513	Jeffrey Dinowitz	Public Health Law	Health	Requires the commissioner of health to act when areas of lead poisoning are designated	Passed Assembly
A.6557	Jose Rivera	Public Health Law	Health	Requires hospitals to provide language and sign language interpreters to patients	In Committee
A.5311	Adriano Espaillat	Public Health law	Health	Requires immunization of certain children against hepatitis A.	In Committee

2007 Bill	Introduced by	Affects Sections of the Law	Referred to Committee	Description	Status
A.2136	Felix Ortiz	Public Health Law	Health	Prohibits any person from disclosing health care information or personal information to a person who engages in the business of accession and compiling information for commercial purposes with the marketing of a product or service without the explicit written authorization of the data subject	In Committee
A.2625	Jose R. Peralta	Pub Health Law	Health	Penalizes by a minimum of \$2500 or double to renting residential property if such rental violates state or local occupancy limits, zoning laws, etc.	In Committee
2006 Law	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Education	Directs the establishment of a children's mental health plan	Signed into Law in 2006
2005 Law	Peter M. Rivera	Mental Hygiene Law	Mental Health	Enacts the "geriatric mental health act"	Signed into Law in 2005
2006 Law	Peter M. Rivera	Civil Service Law	Governmental Employees	Establishes an independent commission on increasing diversity in the state government workforce within the department of civil service	Signed into Law in 2006
N/A	Peter M. Rivera	Civil Service Law	Governmental Employees	Directs the State to establish equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programs for state civil service employment	Passed Assembly in 2006
N/A	Peter M. Rivera	Civil Service Law	Governmental Employees	Provides that all affirmative action officers and administrators employed by the State shall be in competitive classified positions	Passed Assembly in 2006
N/A	Peter M. Rivera	Civil Service Law	Governmental Employees	Requires the department of civil service to report the numbers of provisional and temporary employees in state service for more than 9 and 18 months	Vetoed by the Governor in 2006
N/A	Peter M. Rivera	Civil Service Law	Governmental Employees	Provides that employees required to have foreign language skills be paid a salary differential	Passed Assembly in 2006
A.4629	Adriano Espaillat		Housing	Authorizes the commissioner of the division of housing and community renewal to prescribe certain forms in different languages	In Committee
A.1137	Joseph R. Lentol	Multiple Dwellings Law	Housing	Imposes criminal penalties on landlords who willfully fail to provide heat to tenants	In Committee
A.3035	Luis Diaz	Private Housing Finance Law and the Real Property Tax Law	Housing	Extends the effectiveness of the power of the NYC housing development corporation and the NYS housing finance agency to finance certain multi-family housing.	In Committee
A.6739	Peter M. Rivera	Insurance Law	Insurance	Requires continued coverage of a prescription drug if a patient was on such drug prior to a policy change.	In Committee
A.2657	Ruben Diaz Jr.	General Obligations Law	Judiciary	Repeals New York State's "one free bite" rule and makes the owner of a dog liable for damages suffered by any person who is bitten by the dog while in a public place or lawfully in a private place	In Committee
2004 Law	Phil Ramos	Uniform District Court Act	Judiciary	Allows the service of summons to be issued anywhere in the State	Signed into Law in 2004
A.2314	Sam Hoyt	Labor Law	Labor	Establishes the "Parental Involvement Leave Act" to enable parents an opportunity to attend their child's school-related functions during work hours that cannot be scheduled during non-work hours	In Committee

2007 Bill	Introduced by	Affects Sections of the Law	Referred to Committee	Description	Status
A.5712	Vito J. Lopez	Labor Law	Labor	Establishes a youth employment program to create part-time employment opportunities for 10,000 eligible high school students at non-profit agencies, youth centers, social service agencies and senior citizen centers, enabling such youths from low income families to earn additional income and make valuable contributions to the community: appropriates \$14,000,000	In Committee
A.56	Ivan C. Lafayette	Bank Law	Banking	Credit unions and federal credit unions are granted the opportunity to take part in the banking development district program, which enables them to encourage the establishment of branches in geographic locations	Passed Assembly
A.1168	Jeffrey Dinowitz	Election Law	Elections Law	Enacts "The Student Voter's Rights Act" for SUNY and CUNY schools	On 3rd Reading/ Passed Assembly in 2006
A.5833	Sam Hoyt	Real Property Tax Law	Real Property Taxation	"Neighborhood Quality of life Tax Incentive Act" provides exemption up to 10% of the increase in assessed value of the property which is attributed to construction etc.	In Committee
A.1593	Vito J. Lopez	Tax Law	Real Property Taxation	Expands the applicability of the real property circuit breaker tax credit to the neediest of the State's residents	In Committee
A.4232	Phil Ramos		Real Property Taxation	Would authorize the assessor of the town of Islip to exempt the Church of God from real property taxes	In Committee
A.627	Keith Wright	Executive Law	Rules	Prohibits police officers from using racial and ethnic profiling	Passed Assembly
A.3960	Felix Ortiz	Executive Law	Rules	Requires State departments, divisions, commissions, agencies and other entities which have a website to provide a link on such website to non-English information	In Committee
2004 Law	Peter M. Rivera	Insurance Law	Rules	Prohibits the consideration of a consumer's credit history in the determination of rates, premiums, cancellation, denial or nonrenewal	Signed into Law in 2004
A.4249	Felix Ortiz	Vehicle & Transportation Law	Transportation	Allows the use of the tax identification number to be used when a legal immigrant applies for a driver's license or its renewal	In Committee
A.3755	Felix Ortiz	Vehicle & Transportation Law	Transportation	Allows alternate identification when a person does not have a driver's license, social security number or a tax id	In Committee
2006 Law	Ivan C. Lafayette	Vehicle & Transportation Law	Transportation	Gives permission to install photo-monitoring devices where traffic control signals are located at intersections	Signed into Law in 2006
A.4200	Phil Ramos	Penal Law	Codes	Enacts the criminal street gang related crimes act	In Committee
A.1612	Peter M. Rivera	Mental Hygiene	Mental Health	Directs the Office of Mental Health to establish 2 centers of excellence in culturally and linguistically competent mental health services to underserved populations	In Ways & Means/ Vetoed by the Governor in 2006
A.1688	Peter M. Rivera	Penal Law	Codes	Creates the crime of engaging in criminal street gang activity	In Committee

2007 Bill	Introduced by	Affects Sections of the Law	Referred to Committee	Description	Status
A.1913	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Higher Education	Requires education degree granting institutions to provide instruction in the social and emotional development and learning of children	In Committee
A.5545	Peter M. Rivera	General Business Law	Consumer Affairs and Protection	Requires motor vehicle sales contracts to be written in the language in which such contracts were negotiated	In Committee
A.540	Peter M. Rivera	Executive Law	Governmental Operations	Eliminates the maximum age for appointment as a member of the state police and requires retirement at age 70	In Committee
A.3831	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Education	Requires public school students in grades 1 through 12 to wear a school district uniform	In Committee
A.3732	Peter M. Rivera	Mental Hygiene Law	Mental Health	Enacts the "minority mental health act" to establish the division of minority mental health within the office of mental health	In Ways & Means/ Passed Assembly in 2006
A.5722	Peter M. Rivera	General Business Law	Consumer Affairs and Protection	Prohibits a retailer from requiring a consumer with the original sales receipt to provide identification when returning or exchanging goods	
A.6841	Peter M. Rivera	Commissions	Corporations, Authorities & Commissions	Establishes commission on feasibility of constructing and operating light rail commuter system between counties of Orange and/or Sullivan, and NYC	In Committee
A.3803	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Education	Prohibits school districts and child care facilities from allowing motor vehicles to idle while parked or standing in front of a school or facility	In Committee
A.4588	Peter M. Rivera	Education Law	Education	Requires every school to provide and maintain an appropriate number and types of nebulizers for use by students	In Committee
A.1817	Peter M. Rivera	Vehicle & Transportation Law	Transportation	Enacts "P.J.'s Law" to require school bus drivers and attendants transporting children with a disability to complete training in children's special needs	In Ways & Means
A.6561	Jose Rivera	Highway Law	Transportation	Authorizes the commissioner of transportation to install reflectors on the lane of the Adirondack northway portion of interstate Route 87.	In Committee
A.2134	Felix Ortiz	Education Law	Ways & Means	Authorizes the commissioner of education to establish the school breakfast incentive program	In Committee
A.4872	Adriano Espaillat	Education Law	Education	Bilingual teachers of tomorrow teach recruitment and retention program to attract and retain bilingual, certified teachers in areas of greatest need.	In Ways & Means



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