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January 7, 2014



The Leadership
Conference

Dear Senator,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to share with you our legislative goals for the coming year. Our 15 task forces worked to identify and develop a comprehensive list of issues that represent a path forward for our country in bringing change in all sectors—including the economy, employment, education, health care, criminal justice, and others.

The Leadership Conference believes that these important legislative priorities are well-positioned for Congressional action. Many of the legislative items on our list are bills that have had bipartisan support and others have emerged to address critical issues, such as voting rights, economic insecurity, immigration reform, and preventing discrimination in employment, contracting, and housing. While the list that follows does not reflect the complete agenda of all of our member organizations, it does highlight the issues that are at the top of the coalition's agenda. We believe that these goals can and should be met by the 113th Congress.

The Leadership Conference looks forward to continuing to work with you to further these important goals. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Nancy Zirkin or Corrine Yu at 202-466-3311.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President

Budget:

- Extend federal emergency unemployment benefits, with investments in re-employment services, until the unemployment rate and long-term unemployment rate come down significantly.
- Ensure the ongoing viability and sustainability of Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, and SSDI to provide access to all eligible individuals without restricting eligibility, reducing access to services and providers, or imposing unreasonable costs on enrollees. Oppose funding changes that will shift costs to enrollees, providers or states; or structural changes that would negatively impact the programs such as a block grant or per capita cap for Medicaid or transforming Medicare into a voucher program.

Census:

- Propose and advocate for sufficient funding to support early and thorough planning for the 2020 Census, to ensure that operational and technological innovations designed to contain overall census costs are robust and do not diminish efforts to address the persistent disproportionate undercount of populations of color and other historically harder-to-count population groups, such as immigrants, young children, and rural and low-income households.
- Ensure an accurate American Community Survey by actively supporting continued mandatory response and full annual funding to ensure adequate sample size, and by implementing steps to ensure reliable, comprehensive measurement of smaller and special populations.

Civil Rights Enforcement and Funding: Align funding for civil rights agencies with the identified needs of each agency, taking into consideration overall agency budgets, civil rights statutory jurisdictions, complaint flows, complexities of case investigations and resolutions, needs and plans for proactive compliance reviews, staff training and capacity-building needs, and needs for robust data collection and analysis.

Criminal Justice:

- Pass the End Racial Profiling Act (S.1038/ H.R. 2851).
- Pass the Second Chance Reauthorization Act (S.1690/H.R. 3465).
- Pass a sentencing reform package that includes: the Justice Safety Valve (S. 619/ H.R. 3382), the Smarter Sentencing Act (S. 410/ H.R. 1695), and the Recidivism Reduction and Public Safety Act (S.1675).
- Pass the Youth PROMISE Act (S. 307/ H.R. 1318).

Economic Security:

- Raise the federal minimum wage to at least \$10.10 per hour, indexed for inflation, and raise the minimum wage for tipped workers to at least 70 percent of the minimum wage.
- Pass legislation that strengthens and expands income supports, including SSI, Social Security, TANF, nutrition assistance, child care, and child support.
- Pass tax policies that make the tax system fairer and that raise needed revenues by closing corporate tax loopholes, restoring more progressive tax rates, ending the preferential treatment of investment income, and restoring a meaningful estate tax. Reform tax expenditures to better

serve low- and moderate-income taxpayers by permanently extending and expanding refundable tax credits.

Education:

- Pass the Strong Start for America's Children Act, which would increase access and quality to critical early learning opportunities for all children regardless of race, color, or ZIP code.
- Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), but only by enacting the Senate's Strengthening America's Schools Act of 2013 without any weakening amendments. Fully fund Title I, Title III and other ESEA programs targeted to meeting the needs of disadvantaged student populations. Expand funding for the magnet schools and other programs to promote diversity and reduce racial isolation.
- Increase the quality and access to postsecondary education and job training, by reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act through the Workforce Investment Act of 2013 and the Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act; maintaining TRIO programs; and improving the Pell grant program.
- Pass an enhanced Safe Schools Improvement Act, the Student Nondiscrimination Act, the Positive Behavior for Safe and Effective Schools Act, and the Ending Corporal Punishment Act—critical legislation to ensure students attend school in a safe, nurturing and welcoming environment, free of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or harsh disciplinary practices.

Employment

- Pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (S. 815 / H.R. 1755), which would prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Pass the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (S.1391 / H.R. 2852), which would amend the Age Discrimination in Employment Act to allow mixed motive claims.
- Pass the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 84/ H.R. 377), which would amend the Equal Pay Act to strengthen remedies and enforcement and limit employer defenses.

Equal Opportunity: Continue to investigate the ongoing persistence of discrimination against minority and women entrepreneurs; explore innovative solutions to the problems of such discrimination and inequity; and defend against efforts to eliminate or curtail equal opportunity programs for women and minority businesses, including in appropriating and authorizing legislation.

Fair Housing: Pass the Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act of 2013 (S. 1242/H.R. 2479), which would amend the Fair Housing Act to include LGBT, marital status, and source-of-income protections, and other changes.

Hate Crimes:

- Fund grants authorized under Sec. 4704 of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which are intended to help support criminal investigations and prosecutions by state, local, and tribal law enforcement officials.
- Hold oversight hearings and briefing on ways to ensure more accurate, helpful national hate crime statistics—including greater transparency and accountability.

Health Care: Pass the Health Equity and Accountability Act (S. 2474/H.R. 2954).

Human Rights: Ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Immigration: Pursue comprehensive immigration reform, including a realistic path to citizenship, the DREAM Act (including in-state tuition and access to health care), AgJOBS, the Reuniting Families Act, due process in detention and removal, worker protections, safeguards against profiling, and other much-needed improvements to our existing immigration, naturalization, and integration policies. This reform should *not* include any “surge” in border enforcement, expanded detention, or increased state & local immigration enforcement.

Jobs: Invest in job creation that builds the economy and meets pressing needs, including modernizing infrastructure (transportation, schools, broadband, water treatment, etc.); providing care (improve funding for home care services and related training and job quality measures); restoring public services (aid to states and localities to put teachers, first responders and others back to work); manufacturing (especially relating to energy efficiency and renewables); and providing targeted assistance to underserved communities.

Media/Telecommunications:

- Update the Electronic Communications Privacy Act to establish that law enforcement searches of email, cell phones, online web content, and GPS devices receive the same Fourth Amendment protection as letters and telephone calls did in previous generations.
- Protect the Lifeline program from attack, and modernize the program to help low-income households gain access to broadband Internet service.

Transportation: Pass a transformative transportation reauthorization that (1) improves job opportunities for underrepresented communities in the transportation sector; (2) ensures community involvement and public participation in transportation planning and decision making; (3) protects against cuts to public transportation funding and service; (4) promotes safety for pedestrians and bicyclists; (5) ensures that streets and public rights-of-way are safe and accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities; and (6) targets transportation dollars toward communities most in need of investment.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Pass reauthorizing legislation that transforms the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights into a truly independent and effective agency, includes increased funding for the agency, and restores and expands its historic mission of protecting and promoting civil and human rights.

Voting Rights:

- Pass legislation to restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act struck down by the Supreme Court’s *Shelby County* ruling.
- Pass the Voter Registration Modernization Act, which is an important first step toward streamlining and modernizing our country’s antiquated and overburdened voter registration system.
- Pass The Democracy Restoration Act, which would restore voting rights in federal elections to the nearly four million Americans who have lost their voting rights following a criminal conviction, and who have been released from prison and are living in the community.