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## **Virginia Latino Leaders Council**

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### **Virginia Latino Leaders Council Endorses Northam, Fairfax and Herring Joins other advocacy groups in denouncing GOP anti-Latino campaign advertising**

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Fairfax, Virginia – Today the Virginia Latino Leaders Council (VLLC), a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting Latino civic engagement and candidates who support the well-being of the Latino community, endorsed Ralph Northam for Virginia Governor, Justin Fairfax for Lieutenant Governor, and Mark Herring for Virginia Attorney General. The announcement comes after a VLLC preference survey of over 600 Latino activists yielded an overwhelming 97% support for the three candidates.

VLLC President, The Honorable J. Walter Tejada, stated, “Northam, Fairfax and Herring offer a platform that focuses on continuing economic opportunity and employment, healthcare, and education for all Virginians. Their inclusive records send a message that diverse residents of all backgrounds are welcome in our commonwealth. This stands in contrast to the ugly anti-immigrant rhetoric coming out of the White House, and now being utilized by the Republican candidates in this year’s election. Gillespie and company have chosen to scapegoat the Latino community with allegations that are blatantly false.”

Tejada continued, “VLLC condemns the divisive, xenophobic tactics that the Republican candidates are injecting into this election. Our organization will work tirelessly to inform our community about the candidates who stand with our values of inclusion and opportunity for all. Today we announce a Spanish language radio and print campaign throughout Northern Virginia, Richmond and Hampton Roads to educate Latino voters and encourage their support for Ralph Northam, Justin Fairfax, and Mark Herring as the candidates who offer economic, health and educational opportunities for everyone in our state.”

Other advocacy groups joining VLLC today in denouncing the divisive campaign tactics of the Republican candidates include the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), People for the American Way, Mason Dreamers, business and community leaders.

Jaime Contreras, a naturalized citizen and Vice President at SEIU 32BJ, stated, “Gillespie should be embarrassed by his embrace of Trump’s destructive agenda and of falsely convincing Virginians that their own problems would be solved by destroying the lives of immigrants. Virginia needs responsible leaders who understand that immigrants are indispensable to keeping our economy running, not Gillespie’s vile and cowardly attacks on an entire culture.”

Last month, 32BJ announced a joint endorsement with SEIU Virginia 512 of Northam, Lieutenant Gubernatorial candidate Justin Fairfax and Attorney General Mark Herring. The unions, which collectively represent more than 10,000 workers, will provide significant support, including hundreds of SEIU members

who will knock on more than 200,000 doors and speak out within their communities. SEIU member volunteers were a vital part of the ground operation that helped put Virginia in Clinton's column. Together, they are a powerful voting bloc that will continue to be a decisive force in this November's election as well.

As the largest property service workers union in the country, 32BJ represent 163,000 members in 11 states. The overwhelming majority of 32BJ's 18,000 members in the D.C. Metropolitan Area are immigrants from Central and South America. 32BJ members hail from 64 different countries and speak 28 different languages.

Rosalba Llenas, owner of a Virginia-based small business dedicated to providing quality interior design services, said, "I attribute a large portion of our success to the craftsmanship, collaboration and dedication of the construction team. We work hand-in-hand with different trades to implement our design ideas. In Virginia, Hispanics make up close to 30% of the construction workforce, they work hard, long hours and take pride in their work, making them ideal candidates for the labor-intensive conditions of the construction industry."

She continued, "However, in view of recent anti-immigrant sentiments and propaganda, many Latinos now live in fear of losing everything they have worked for, losing their jobs and even losing their families. On a profound level, this situation is devastating to the family structure and to our community. From a business point of view, losing valuable workers that have gone through extensive training and have proven to be reliable, will hinder businesses' ability to satisfy their customer's demands in a timely and efficient manner, which in return will hurt their profitability and, consequently, hurt Virginia's economy."

Lizet Ocampo, political director at People For the American Way, said, "We're here today to say that Ed Gillespie's bigoted smears against Latinos are unacceptable, and they won't work." Ms. Ocampo further stated, "Gillespie is taking a page from the Trump playbook, and just last year we saw Virginia voters reject that kind of fear mongering and divisiveness. We're proud to be holding Gillespie accountable for his behavior with Latino voters, along with others who are outraged at this kind of extremism."

Rodrigo Velasquez, Mason DREAMers Advisory Board member, stated, "For the first time in our history, we are no longer sitting on the sideline of elections and hoping for the best. As an issue-based organization, we stand with candidates like Ralph Northam, Justin Fairfax, and Mark Herring who have proven their commitment to our community. We strongly oppose and condemn the bigotry, hate, and xenophobia being used by Ed Gillespie, Jill Vogel, and John Adams who have chosen to draw from Trump's playbook to pander for votes. Mason DREAMers calls on all our allies and supporters to vote this election with us in mind. While many of us cannot vote, we will focus on energies in turning people out who share our values of equity and opportunity for all."

The Virginia Latino Leaders Council Board includes President J. Walter Tejada, Vice President Beatriz Amberman, Treasurer Leni Gonzalez, Members-at-Large Edgar Aranda-Yanoc, The Honorable Emma Violand-Sanchez and The Honorable Fernando Marty Martinez, Legal Counsel Sam McTyre, and Executive Director Andres Tobar.

**The Virginia Latino Leaders Council is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer, statewide organization comprised of Latino leaders and activists who focus on Latino civic engagement. VLLC communicates with Latino voters and establishes a dialogue with Virginia's state government officials to ensure that Virginia remains a welcoming community for all.**