

LAA Press Release

To: ALL MEDIA

DATE: May 18, 2011

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LAA is Deeply Concerned about Impact of HB 87 on Georgia

ATLANTA (May 18, 2011) – The Latin American Association is deeply concerned that Georgia has joined the ranks of Arizona and Utah by signing controversial immigration policy into law. Both states are facing lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the law and Georgia will face the same costly challenge within weeks. Arizona has lost 40 conventions since the law was enacted (Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association) and Georgia can expect the same.

Governor Deal signed House Bill 87 into law despite the opposition of industry leaders, chambers of commerce, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, and thousands of Georgia residents with a broad range of concerns. Among the concerns: the true cost of the law for the state of Georgia. The budget for enforcing the bill has never been published; concerns over potential racial profiling have not been put to rest; and the argument that Georgia failed to consider: only U.S. Congress has the authority to regulate immigration.

Supporters of HB 87 believe that it will save the state tax dollars. We believe that they have failed to take into account the invaluable contributions of the families and individuals they seek to remove from the state. Latino families contribute to the economic viability of the state by purchasing homes, opening businesses, including restaurants and grocery stores, and pay thousands of dollars in sales taxes and state and federal taxes. In 2009, their purchasing power in Georgia alone was \$15 billion (Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia, 2009). Some of Georgia's most important industries, including construction, landscaping, hospitality, textiles, poultry and agriculture, rely on the Latino workforce. Their absence will impact the state's economy.

The cost to the tax payer and the businesses is not the only cost we should be concerned about. Thousands of families were welcomed years ago as Atlanta enjoyed record growth and a construction boom. Turning a blind eye to documentation, we welcomed the workers and praised their work ethic. Now we are telling the same families, who have become part of the fabric of our communities and whose U.S. citizen children have never lived outside of Georgia, to "go home." They are not felons or violent criminals. They are fathers, husbands, mothers, wives, sisters, brothers, daughters and sons.

Comprehensive immigration reform established at the federal level is the only way to fully and fairly address the inadequate immigration system. The Latin American Association decries the signing of this law and the toll it will take on families, businesses, and communities in Georgia and urges Georgia to demand fair and just immigration reform through U.S. Congress.

Founded in 1972, the Latin American Association is the oldest and largest provider of services to the Latino community in Georgia. Its mission is to help Latino families achieve their aspirations for academic, social and economic advancement. We accomplish this through direct programs

and integrated community partnerships that focus on: youth academic achievement, education and prevention, and service to families with urgent needs.

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About The Latin American Association:

The Latin American Association helps Latino families achieve their aspirations for academic, social and economic advancement. We accomplish this through direct programs and integrated community partnerships that focus on youth academic achievement, education and prevention, and services to families with urgent needs. The LAA offers employment, immigration and translation services, as well as programs for youth, computer classes, parenting classes, and English and Spanish language classes. Visit www.thelaa.org for more information.