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LULAC meets with national officials, plans to implement new programs in Iowa

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DES MOINES – Representatives from the Iowa League of United Latin American Citizens met with Iowa Congressmen and other national leaders, White House cabinet officials and other Latino advocacy officials as part of their trip to the national LULAC Legislative Conference.

Iowa LULAC State Director Joe Enriquez Henry and Deputy Director Mike Reyes met with U.S. Reps. Bruce Braley and Dave Loebsack, both Democrats from Iowa; Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.); and staff members for Iowa Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin and Congressman Ben Ray Luján (D-New Mexico) about several concerns of the Latino community. Among those items discussed were access to affordable health care and quality educational opportunities, and immigration reform.

“Our meetings with our elected leaders and their staff gave us an opportunity to remind them Latinos are a growing population in our state,” Enriquez Henry said. “We need their help at the national level to ensure Latinos have the same access to health care and good jobs, and that our children have the resources necessary to become well-educated students who will contribute to our state and country as adults.”

More than 500 people attended the annual Legislative Conference and Awards Gala on Feb. 13 and 14 in Washington, D.C. Each year, the annual conference gives LULAC members from across the country the chance to meet with members of Congress and agency leaders. Among this year's topics are comprehensive immigration reform, disparities in health care, education and technology.

Enriquez Henry and Reyes also participated in panel discussions about immigration reform, how federal education requirements are affecting Latino children and the efforts LULAC is taking nationally to help improve the health of Latinos.

Iowa LULAC will focus on several efforts in the state including:

- A push to Iowa lawmakers to improve educational efforts that specifically target Latino students. According to information from national LULAC, Iowa lost \$10.7 million in federal money that would have gone toward English language acquisition, improved teacher quality and special education. Improvements in education continue to be a top priority for Iowa LULAC.
- Starting a Latinos Living Healthy initiative in Iowa – part of a national LULAC effort – that will include workshops, training, health festivals and more geared toward helping the Latino community improve its health and lifestyle.

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- Support immigration reform efforts that protect families. Iowa LULAC stands behind reform steps that allow parents, who may be illegal immigrants, to get work permits and driver’s licenses, in addition to efforts that are geared toward the “Dreamers” or youth who were brought to the United States illegally by their parents.

Founded in 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens is the oldest Latino civil rights organization in the United States. There are more than 880 local LULAC councils, which hold voter registration drives, provide awareness to residents about language and immigration issues, sponsor programs and advocate for Latinos.

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