



Democracia U.S.A. is a national, non-partisan, multi-year organization that seeks to increase the active participation and prominence of Hispanics in the American political process through voter empowerment, leadership training, civic engagement, and community organizing. Democracia U.S.A. has a presence in 7 states: Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, and Texas. Since 2004, Democracia U.S.A. has registered over 320,000 new Hispanic voters and registering over 3% of the entire national Latino electorate. More than 30% of the Latinos we register are young Latino voters.

Our experiences with Latino youth in distinct geographic areas of the country have shown that Latino young voters are eager to participate in issues that affect them both locally and nationally. This is clear. Latino young voters make up 1.4% of the total U.S. electorate, but according to CNN Exit Poll Results of the 2008 Presidential Election, registered Hispanic young voters accounted for 3% of the turnout in the election, **doubling their impact on the electorate** during this past election.

They consider the **Iraq War, the economy, immigration, healthcare and green jobs/environment** as top issues. And they are already engaging in these issues: through their disproportionate volunteerism in the U.S. armed forces or in grassroots organizing around issues like immigration. For example, the organizing force of Latino youth was evident when they mobilized to prevent their high school classmates Alex and Juan Gomez from being deported in Miami, Florida in 2007.

Latino youth want to be brought to the table for open discussion on issues importance to them and if necessary organize to advocate on their own behalf in Washington DC or in local government. But young Latinos cannot do this all alone. They need help. Help with leadership development, investment in their education on a grassroots level and on a school/college level.

Recent research from Bendixen & Associates has shown that **Latino and minority youth are the key youth constituencies tilting the young demographic in the U.S. towards progressive issues.** As a result of this data, Democracia U.S.A. strongly believes that there needs to be a serious investment in Latino and minority youth across the United States to first, sustain the progressive and engaging activism of Latino youth, and second, develop this talent pool with opportunities in leadership development, education, and community organizing on a

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local and national level. In 2009, Democracia U.S.A. will be organizing Latino youth around issues of immigration, healthcare, and the environment.

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