

1987
LULAC
NATIONAL
CONVENTION

Honorary Chairman
JERE W THOMPSON
President
Southland Corporation

May 8, 1987

The Honorable Richard A. Gephardt
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gephardt:

The League of United Latin American Citizens will hold its 58th Annual Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas on June 24-28, 1987. Dignitaries from across America are addressing the estimated 3,500 convention guests and delegates and invitees who are expected to be present.

Today I was advised by one of your Congressional Aides, Mr. Maurice Daniel, that you will be unable to address our convention. I was distressed and disturbed to learn of your conscious decision to decline an invitation issued with sincerity and good will.

For your information, LULAC is the Nation's oldest and largest Hispanic organization. The LULAC Convention in Corpus Christi represents the largest single gathering of Hispanic Americans in Texas in 1987. As a presidential aspirant for the Democratic nomination in 1988 I am extremely surprised that you would essentially ignore the Hispanic constituency, which constitutes a significant part of America's socio-economic and political scene. Further, I will advise you that in Texas alone there are one million registered Mexican American voters.

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Your decision to ignore our Convention sends a clear message of disinterest. Further, the suggestion by your aide that we accept a surrogate to address the LULAC Convention was an absolute insult. Will a surrogate do your campaigning for you in Texas between now and March, 1988? Will a surrogate stand in for you to accept the nomination of the Democratic Party? Are you going to ask us to vote for a surrogate when the 1988 Presidential Primary is held in Texas? Is your surrogate going to rule the White House, should you be elected? Absurdity breeds absurdity.

The March Presidential Primary is just around the corner. You cannot carry Texas without a strong base of Hispanic voters' support. The Mexican American voter is not about to allow itself to be gouged again in 1988. If you choose to ignore us, others will surely listen. If I must continuously hear from your "surrogates", I will never support your candidacy and I will attempt to persuade others to do likewise.

Accordingly, I trust that you will reconsider your earlier rejection and that you will make the necessary plans to be in Corpus Christi at a time suitable to your schedule during the LULAC National Convention. Otherwise, we in South Texas will have little but disdain for your presidential ambitions.

Come eat a taco with me in Corpus Christi.



Ruben Bonilla, Jr.
1987 LULAC National Convention Chairman
Past LULAC National President
Chairman, Mexican American Democrats

RBjr/it

cc: Associated Press
Austin, Texas

cc: Associated Press
San Antonio, Texas

cc: Associated Press
Dallas, Texas

cc: Associated Press
Washington, D.C.

bcc: Dr. Hector Garcia ✓

May 1987

Jackson may be only Democrat courting Hispanic vote

By Kevin Sack
Staff Writer

SANTA FE, N.M. — In a deliberate appeal to Westerners and Hispanics, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) held its midyear meeting last week in New Mexico, a state where a third of the registered voters are Latinos.

But when the DNC's Hispanic caucus convened Tuesday night, the dozens of campaign operatives who had invaded Santa Fe all skipped the session.

The one exception was the Rev. Jesse Jackson, whose unannounced arrival at the meeting earned him an enthusiastic ovation.

And yet the Hispanics were not an easy sell for Jackson, who has not overcome the perception generated four years ago that Hispanics are junior partners in his coalition.

During the session, caucus members revived complaints that Jack-

son's Rainbow Coalition is colored only black, not brown.

"Who in your Rainbow Coalition has the last name Lopez or Gomez or Garcia, and where are they?" asked California's Carmen Perez, the caucus chairwoman.

The confrontation illustrates the 1988 dilemma of Democratic Hispanic voters. Despite their electoral importance in key states like Texas, they feel ignored by most Democratic candidates.

The numbers alone demonstrate the danger of dismissing the Hispanic vote. Between 1980 and 1984, the number of registered Hispanic voters jumped 27 percent, compared to 24 percent for blacks and 9 percent for whites.

While the nation's approximately 3.8 million Hispanic registered voters comprise only 3.3 percent of the U.S. voting force, they are nearly 8 percent of Texas' voters, making Hispanics the swing voters in the largest Super Tuesday primary

state.

Most of those voters are Democrats. With the exception of Cuban-Americans, whose anti-communist heritage has translated into Republican support, the vast majority of 1984 Latino voters identified themselves as Democrats, according to a survey by the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project.

Early predictions are that former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt, who speaks fluent Spanish, and former Colorado Sen. Gary Hart, who won Hispanic support in 1984, are most likely to compete with Jackson for the Hispanic vote.

Ruben Bonilla, a Corpus Christi, Texas, lawyer who chairs the Mexican-American Democrats of Texas, said Hispanics are attracted by Babbitt's and Hart's support for bilingual education and immigration reform, and their opposition to providing federal aid to the Nicaraguan contras.

But Bonilla and other Hispanic

leaders warn that Latinos are becoming increasingly concerned about mainstream issues like the federal deficit, education, jobs, crime and health care.

Because of their history of political exclusion, Hispanics also are looking for symbolic gestures such as the appointment of Latinos to top campaign staff positions.

Jackson said he had asked Hispanics to join his team, specifically former New Mexico Gov. Toney Anaya, who rejected an offer to become co-chairman of the Rainbow Coalition.

Anaya said his primary goal is to mobilize Hispanic voters, and he has not decided that joining Jackson is the best method. But he said Jackson is "way ahead of other candidates" in pursuing Hispanic votes.

"It's one thing to be casually courted and another to be asked to dance," he said. "I don't think anyone has asked for the dance except Jesse Jackson."