What Do Latinos Want the Biden Administration to Tackle First?

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis and repairing the economy should be President Biden's first line of business, according to Latino voters.

January 22, 2021 By Alicia Green

Now that President Joe Biden and his administration have begun their work in Washington, DC, to repair the United States, Latinos are hoping Biden's first priority is COVID-19 and economic recovery, according to a recent poll by political grassroots organization Voto Latino and Change Research.

For the poll, researchers surveyed 1,029 Latinos who were registered to vote and lived in battleground states, such as Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin.

Results revealed that 56% of respondents wanted Biden and his team to focus on COVID-19 in his first 100 days in office. COVID-19 recovery was followed by jobs and the economy (42%).

In addition, Latino surveyors expressed that other issues important to them were ending corruption in government (36%), expanding affordable health care (28%) and addressing systemic racism (27%). Young Latinos (ages 18 to 34), in particular, are concerned about racism (35%) and climate change (23%).

Prior to Biden's inauguration, Maria Teresa Kumar, president and CEO of Voto Latino, explained that Latinos expected Biden's $1.9 trillion spending package to address the pandemic, especially in regard to its disproportionate impact on Blacks and Latinos.

An estimated 68% of Latinos reported that a relative, friend or loved one had contracted the new coronavirus, with 30% dying from COVID-19 complications. Two in five lost wages, work or a job, which caused them to struggle to pay for rent, mortgage, groceries, student loans and other bills.

Even despite these problems, 47% of voters said they were unsure about or wouldn't get the COVID-19 vaccine because there is still a lot of work to do when it comes to racial disparities in health care. These voters also believe that more needs to be done to ensure vaccine safety and efficacy as well as overall transparency.

Kumar met personally with both Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris' teams that plan to tackle COVID-19 through a health equity lens. "They will need to continually engage Latinxs in this process to build their trust, earn this support, and ensure their concerns and needs are being addressed," she said.

According to Kumar, former president Donald Trump "left a bad taste" in the mouths of a lot of Latino voters, particularly young people who are passionate about racial and social justice.

"When thinking about the agenda for Latinx voters in 2021, government leaders must have a plan in place to address health care disparities, environmental issues, and our divided nation," said Kumar. "There's much work to be done in the year ahead and Voto Latino will continue to push for this agenda to ensure a more equal, inclusive democracy for all."

For related coverage, read "Structural Racism Puts Latinos at Risk for COVID-19" and "Latinos Working in Food Processing and Agriculture Face Greater COVID-19 Risk."

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