



Latino Texas Policy Center: Social Justice and Equity

The Latino Texas Policy Center (LTPC) is a developing statewide organization based in San Antonio. The Texas Latino Policy Symposium (TXLPS), which includes this blog, has described the need; and advocated for leadership to establish a Latino ‘Think Tank.’ Its purpose **is to increase** the policy-making influence of Latinos.

The **values and principles of the organization uphold and are committed to the concept of *Bienestar*¹** (wellbeing) because it embraces social justice needs for equity in economic mobility opportunities impacted by education, employment and income, housing, health, human resource access, immigration, etc.

Natalie Ann Sanchez-Lopez², LTPC Executive Director & CEO, highlights the crucial reasons behind the organization’s inception. They include:

- Texas Latinos lag significantly behind Latinos in other states socioeconomically and politically.
- There is a lack of institutional structure supporting and fostering public policy development related to the Latino population.
- There is a lack of collaboration between researchers and community advocates across Latino communities.
- There is a need to strengthen coalitions amongst Latino and other communities of color with policy research that supports their social justice and equity policy needs and objectives.
- Texas is home to some of the most racialized and inequitable policymaking - notably oppressive and perpetuating barriers to social and economic mobility for Latinos and all peoples of color.

Over 50 years ago (1968), the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights conducted five days of hearings in San Antonio to address the persistent inequalities that plagued the *bienestar* of Mexican Americans. The issues were intertwined with the state's well-documented history of political oppression and racism. In a state where over 60% (18 million) are people of color, and nearly 12 million (40.2%) are Latinos, we now see the evolution of the issues and attacks in the form of explicit anti-democratic and white nationalist-based political and policy ideologies.

Mexican American political organizing, advocacy, and litigation led to social justice and economic mobility accomplishments in the 1960s and 70s. However, over fifty years later, Latinos still face barriers to education, economic mobility opportunities, good health, and civic engagement.³ The barriers present formidable public policy challenges for Latinos and all citizens of the state through every state region.

Political attacks on critical race theory and ethnic studies, diversity, and inclusion, women’s

reproductive rights, LGBTQ+, immigrants, and voter fraud disinformation exemplify White nationalist policy goals. Policymaking is further worsened by inequitable and limited human capital investment that creates a level-playing field for social and economic mobility.

The Latino Texas Policy Center (LTPC) is developing as an independent nonprofit organization. The Center's **mission** is to create a collaborative policy development and analysis center that promotes, informs, and influences social change that leads to tangible improvements in the *bienestar* of Latinos.

Three program areas will drive the Center's activities. They are:

Research

1. Synthesizing and conducting research that results in policy recommendations to increase opportunities for *bienestar* improvements.
2. Strengthen and increase Latino policy research leadership.

Policy

3. Informing policymakers to influence equitable public policy through interdisciplinary partnerships, and collaborative strategies.
4. Implementing strategic communications that advance our stories, experiences, conditions, and perspectives on policy issues.

Community

5. Advances social change by contributing to policy-driven frameworks rooted in community-driven approaches.
6. Involving and training targeted populations regarding policy research, community issue communications, and policy advocacy.

In summary, the LTPC will ensure policymaking equitably impacts Latino and people of color communities as the framework in policy analysis, recommendations, and communications. LTPC's collaboration with Latino voices directly from the community, coalition partners, public officials, and researchers is the foundation for establishing policy priorities.

¹ *Bienestar* is defined as a perceived quality of life status among individuals, families, and communities affected by social, environmental, and systemic factors. It also embodies social justice concerns, given the Latino experience with institutionalized racism, and harmful public policies.

² **Master in Public Policy**, Political & Economic Development, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

³ *Mexican American Civil Rights in Texas*, Edited by Robert Brischetto and J. Richard Avena, Michigan State University Press, 2021.