



**Remarks by Jorge Elorza
Latino Leaders Luncheon Series
Eagle Leadership Award**

January 18, 2017

Jorge Elorza: Good evening everyone. I think we could do better than that. Good evening everyone.

Voices: Good evening.

Jorge Elorza: Thank you all so much for being here today. I want to begin by recognizing Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. It is true, I remember speaking with candidate Villaraigosa at the time and invited him to this conference with some kids in law school. We're so proud that this Latino was emerging on the national stage. He taking on this leadership position. Now I will always appreciate that he made time to come out to Cambridge and spend some time with us. So thank you so much, Mayor. A future governor. I look forward to making you proud and continuing on the legacy that you've laid in opening doors for the next generation. So please another big round of applause for Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

I also want to recognize Mickey Ibarra. You know, from the time I've gotten to know Mickey -- I think Mayor Villaraigosa

said it perfectly that he is about bringing people together and see how he can open doors for young, new, energetic folks who are stepping to the plate. So I want to thank you personally and I want to thank you profoundly for everything that you've done for me and to shine the spotlight on Latino leaders throughout your career. So please another big round of applause for our good friend Mickey Ibarra.

Last but certainly not least -- I know she is on her way. I think that many of us had a very similar reaction on November 8th. We looked at what happened throughout the country and, you know, we felt as though everything had come crashing down. But I think most of us heard for the very first time about this senator out in the southwest, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, who became the first Latina senator of the United States of America. We are so proud because it's a news that we needed on particular day. Thank you.

For me, it's a great honor to receive this recognition. It's a great privilege to represent the residents of the City of Providence. For those of you who have not been to Providence, let me assure you that it is a beautiful romantic city with world class arts and culture. It has some of the best food on the east coast perhaps with the exception of New York City. It's the City of WaterFire and home to some of the best

universities in the world. It's a city on the move. I hope you all visit and I can guarantee you that you'll fall in love.

Now, as an elected official, we are placed in these positions to speak out for our communities and to stand up on the issues that matter. These are strange times in our communities and in our country. We've seen over the past couple of months and over the past year that many of the values that we thought were enshrined and locked in place are being threatened. Issues such as racial justice, reproductive rights, marriage equality, environmental justice and so many others. Now these are all tremendously important and there is so much work that we have to do on each one of them. But there is one issue that I'd like to focus on while I have this opportunity, and that's immigrant rights.

When it comes to immigrant rights, we simply can't be on the defensive on this issue. When we stand up for immigrants, we should never be shy about celebrating who immigrants are and what they've contributed to this country. This country is already great. It's great not in spite of our immigrants but because of our immigrants. Immigrants are some of the most resilient, some of the most industrious, and some of the most honest people that you will ever meet. They're assets to our communities and they're natural entrepreneurs.

There is a reason why in 2010 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by either immigrants or their children. It's been said that America is more than just a country. America is a concept. This idea that if you work hard and you play by the rules, there is nothing that you can't achieve. Then, perhaps one of the great ironies, it's immigrants more than others who believe that the American dream still exists and who sometimes embody the essence of what it means to be an American. Instead of insulting and expelling our immigrants, we should be celebrating and welcoming them. That's why I'm so proud of my colleagues in the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

With the support of Mayor Eric Garcetti and Mayor Tom Tate, earlier today we submitted an emergency resolution calling on Congress and the new administration to pass comprehensive immigration reform and more specifically to extend support and protection for our DREAMers. In a bipartisan way the executive committee of the conference representing mayors from throughout the country made a statement and stood with our community. I am profoundly grateful and proud of the U.S. Conference of Mayors for doing so. This issue is personal for me just as I know it's personal for many of you.

I was born in the United States but I am the proud son of Guatemalan immigrant parents who taught my sister and I that, if you work hard and stay humble, you can achieve your dreams. I'd

like to think that that immigrant spirit from my parents lives in me. I know that immigrant spirit lives in many others. Generations of immigrants have overcome some of the most overwhelming challenges. In these days that are coming let's follow their lead and engender that same immigrant spirit. On this ride that awaits us, no matter how cold and how dark it gets, let's keep marching forward because we know there are better days on the other side. Thank you all.