



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 16, 2010

CONTACT: Jennifer Korn
(703) 966-8868

**NATIONAL GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN TO ENGAGE HISPANIC FAITH COMMUNITY IN
IMMIGRATION REFORM DEBATE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – “It is time for Congress to catch up to the American people,” said Reverend Luis Cortés, Jr., president of Esperanza, as he opened a press conference announcing Esperanza for America (EFA), a national immigration grassroots campaign. “We reject the notion that conservatives do not support immigration reform. By huge margins, Americans in every part of the country --- swing districts, conservative and liberal districts --- support the types of workable solutions under consideration today. The purpose of Esperanza for America is to make sure that Congress hears more from the 65% of Americans who consistently support immigration reform than the strident fringe minority.”

Joined in the US Capitol by Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Rev. Cortés said that EFA will educate, activate and engage Esperanza’s national network in the national immigration debate.

“In this struggle on immigration reform, we are united by our vision of America. We must stand in solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters. As leaders, we must show compassion on this issue. Our nation is a nation of immigrants – we must not forget that. We must not forget what our faith tells us. We are told in the Book of John, “there is no fear in love.” We must drown out the hate and the fear of those who refer to Latinos as “those people” with a message that is positive and unified,” said Democratic senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey.

From the other side of the aisle, Republican Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, who represents Florida’s 25th District, said, “I am honored to welcome distinguished leaders of the faith-based community to our nation’s capital to discuss an issue as critical to the future of our nation as is immigration reform. Esperanza’s efforts in creating awareness of the importance of real reform are admirable, and I congratulate Reverend Luis Cortés and his team for their activism and commitment to engaging others in advocating to finally get this important issue on the agenda,” Rep. Diaz-Balart said.

Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, said at the conference that “Immigration is one of America’s strengths. Men and women who choose to come to America from another country are testifying to American exceptionalism and their faith in our future as a great nation.”

Four-time Latin Grammy winner Rev. Marcos Witt, pastor of Lakewood Church Hispanic Ministry in Houston, TX, is an EFA national advisory committee member and leader among Latino Christian artists who have endorsed Esperanza for America. Speaking at today’s press conference, Rev. Witt said, “As a pastor, I can say the current situation is nothing short of a humanitarian crisis. When can we stop playing politics and help our country solve this problem? I think the time is now.”

Galen Carey, director of government affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, said, “The National Association of Evangelicals calls on the President and Congress, both Republicans and

Democrats, to work together in a spirit of civility and the public interest to pass immigration reform now. Our system is broken and for too long our politicians have lacked the courage to come together for a meaningful solution. In the meantime, our families and communities are suffering.”

Esperanza is the largest Hispanic faith-based network in the country. With over 12,000 Hispanic congregations and community non-profits, from Roman Catholic to Pentecostal, Esperanza is also the largest Hispanic grassroots organization in the nation. Esperanza for America activates Esperanza’s network. EFA leadership includes some of the most influential Hispanic clergy with the largest congregations in the country. EFA leadership will educate their constituents to meet with Members of Congress in their districts and call their offices to support legislation when it moves forward.

For more information, please go to: www.esperanzaforamerica.com

###