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## HISPANIC GROUPS TO DEMOCRATS: DON'T BLAME US IF YOU LOSE

By Reid J. Epstein  
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If Democrats lose control of the Senate in November, Hispanic advocates say: Don't blame us.

Disenchanted with President Barack Obama for delaying executive action on reforming the nation's deportation system, apathetic about Democratic candidates that for the most part haven't made a direct appeal to Hispanics and without a galvanizing bogeyman on the right to vote against like Mitt Romney in 2012, Hispanic voters are poised to let Democrats lose Senate races and state houses they could otherwise win, key Hispanic advocates said Monday during a briefing at the National Council of La Raza.

The preemptive blame-shifting comes as Democrats across the spectrum – from Mr. Obama on down – fear diminished turnout from the base in November's midterm elections. Gary Segura, a Stanford University professor who is co-founder of the polling firm Latino Decisions, said Latino voters would show their influence by letting some Democrats, like Sen. Kay Hagan of North Carolina, be thrown out of office.

"In any instance where a Latino-preferred candidate loses and that Latino community turned out in smaller numbers because of the disillusionment, Latinos did make a difference. The decision not to vote is still a political decision and is not necessarily irrational," Mr. Segura said. "If you're a Latino in North Carolina and the president delayed his decision to help Kay Hagan in her election, why would you go vote for Kay Hagan? . . . Latinos can have influence by letting people lose, just as they can have influence by helping people win."

In what was widely seen as an effort to help endangered Senate Democrats win re-election, the White House earlier this month said Mr. Obama would delay unveiling his long-promised executive actions on immigration until after the election. The president in June had promised action by the end of the summer.

Mr. Segura's partner, Matt Barreto, cited a June Latino Decisions poll that found 87% of Hispanic voters would be more enthusiastic about voting during in 2014 if the White House took action to renew the Deferred Action program Mr. Obama announced during his 2012 re-election campaign. The same poll found 54% of Latinos said they would be less interested in voting if Mr. Obama determined he has the authority to act but elected not to – exactly as has taken place.

In five states – Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Michigan and North Carolina – the number of Hispanic voters from 2012 exceeds the difference between the two leading Senate candidates in current polling, Mr. Barreto said. Nine states have governor's races where the number of Latino voters exceeds the likely margin between the top two candidates.

But Democratic candidates, aside from Colorado incumbent Sen. Mark Udall, haven't made an appeal to Latino voters, said Clarissa Martinez-De-Castro, NCLR's vice president for research and advocacy.

"People are making campaign decisions, but given the margins, it's kind of foolish to aggressively squander that number," Ms. Martinez said.

NCLR CEO Janet Murguía said advocates are aiming to get as many Latino voters as possible to vote but are resigned to having less of an impact on the midterm elections than they did during the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, when Latino voters helped Mr. Obama win in states like Colorado and Florida.

"We're trying to do everything we can to get our folks to participate," Ms. Murguía said. "We're just trying to educate our community about what are the challenges, both that are structural and candidate-made."

Republican Senate candidates, Ms. Murguía said, have done a good job in 2014 to avoid making statements that poison their relationship with the Latino electorate. But she predicted a congressional stalemate on immigration reform will come back to haunt the GOP – just perhaps not until 2016.

"Some of these folks are at least trying to stay under the radar, but that's not going to be good enough for Republicans if they want to go into the future and win a base of Latino voters," Ms. Murguía said. "It may be good enough for this year, we'll have to see."