

National Museum of the American Latino Community Commission  
The Resources National Parks Subcommittee  
Testimony of Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Mr. Steve Pearce - Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing on the National Museum of the American Latino Community Commission.

We are gathered here today in support of the bipartisan National Museum of the American Latino Community Commission Act, HR 2134.

This bill would take the next step towards ensuring that our premier institutions for the arts and humanities include a greater representation of Hispanic cultural contributions.

The commission created by this bill would have the responsibility of examining and reporting to Congress and the President a plan to establish a new museum dedicated to the art, history, and culture of the Hispanic-American community.

The commission would be comprised of experts in art and museum administration as well as, individuals with experience in the development of similar cultural institutions.

This year we have the opportunity to make significant progress in ensuring that visitors to our nation's capital gain a more complete understanding of who we are and who we are becoming as Americans.

There are nearly 40 million United States residents that share a cultural heritage, which is not represented by any of the permanent exhibits in Washington museums.

As the first Hispanic woman to be elected to the U.S. Congress, I have been proud to represent my diverse South Florida constituency for the past sixteen years.

The Hispanic community is one of America's largest growing populations. As such, Congress must continue to afford the Hispanic community with the opportunities it deserves.

This nation was founded by immigrants who came to our shores in search of freedom and prosperity. These same immigrants have played a significant role in our history and symbolize what makes this country so great.

A museum for the Hispanic-American community would honor all Americans who have successfully fought for their right to live according to the rules of democracy and freedom, denying the rule of tyranny and autocracy.

Hispanics are involved in all aspects of business, politics and society. Statistics show that Hispanics have invested in our business community to help this nation prosper economically to benefit all Americans.

The number of Hispanic-owned businesses grew 31 % between 1997 and 2002, three times the national average for all businesses according to a new report, released last week by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The great diversity of ethnicities and nationalities of the people in the United States is a testament to the power of America's great tradition as a nation of immigrants where even the newest of Americans can become national heroes.

As Hispanics, we have an incredible stake in the future of this great nation. Our glorious country has a beautiful history that is enriched through the lives of the outstanding American citizens that feel a great privilege and an honor to serve our nation.

The leadership of the 109 th Congress is committed to ensuring that Hispanic Americans continue to seek economic opportunities and achieve prosperity. A museum for the Hispanic American community would be keeping with the goals set by the 109 th Congress.

The National Museum will bring together the nation's capital as a place that truly exhibits America's rich cultural diversity.

I thank the chairman for his leadership on this issue and for giving me the opportunity to address you this morning. Thank

you again for your warm welcome.