



# LUIS G. FORTUÑO

RESIDENT COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE NEWSLETTER



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## Strengthening our Values and our Families

The Resident Commissioner, Luis Fortuño, began in October an informative campaign aimed at preventing domestic violence and child abuse. The campaign, which was designed to counteract the attacks against our women and children by the social decline in Puerto Rico, hopes to strengthen families through the inclusion of values into homes and schools, encouragement of active and responsible involvement of parents in raising their children, and responsibilities of a



Resident commissioner, Luis Fortuño participates of a book fair sponsored by his office which for the past two years provides support to faith based and community organizations dedicated to caring for children with special needs.

home.

Fortuño announced his campaign in mid October 2006, in an activity in in Guaynabo where he exhorted citizens, in particular men, to break with the cycle of domestic violence and educate children on the values that make a responsible individual. The campaign focuses on the importance of active participation by all sectors of our society, including government,

the private sector, and non profit organizations, in the prevention of violence.

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## Empowering our Municipalities and Communities

Faithful to his commitment to assist in the process of obtaining federal funds on behalf of Puerto Ricans, the Resident Commissioner's Office sponsored a workshop in cooperation with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the municipality of Bayamón titled "Federal Funds: Opportunities and Compliance", which was held on Friday, November 17, 2006 in the Science Park in Bayamón. The workshop included personnel from the HUD offices in Washington and Puerto Rico, who offered lectures and technical consultations in Spanish for the participants at the activity on the federal grant opportunity for municipalities, private entities, and community and faith based organizations.

Majors, consultants, and directors of housing and economic development attended the workshop where they learned about federal programs aimed at promoting economic and community development in municipal-

ties, including the CBDG program. The workshop emphasized the importance of observing the federal regulations under the grants and programs of the federal Department of Housing, in order to maximize the use of these funds and improve the quality of life for the citizens in these areas.

The workshop also included sessions where community and faith-based organizations learned about programs available under federal Housing which allow for competitive federal grants. In Puerto Rico, a large number of community and faith based organizations have already secured federal funds to strengthen their efforts on behalf of underprivileged communities. On September 2006, three non profit organizations in Puerto Rico obtained a total of \$81,655.00 under the Housing Counseling Program, designed to educate citizens on available opportunities on how to buy and/or

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From Washington

During the past months, I've had the opportunity to meet with you through various activities, including our new Center for Constituent Services. I have observed and heard your concerns over our quality of life in Puerto Rico, and where we raise our children. Your concerns, I believe, are centered on your hope to positively contribute to our island without sacrificing the health, education, and future of our families. Your melancholy is linked to memories of our childhoods in this beautiful island, which grow more tangible as we near the holiday season, and which we hope to offer our children on a daily basis.

As your Resident Commissioner, it is my mission to improve your quality of life and offer your children a prosperous future. With this goal, I present in this bulletin information about our efforts to facilitate the much needed skills and tools to help transform our society from the ground up. These initiatives seek to protect the Puerto Rican family, empower community and faith-based organizations, and strengthen the efforts of our mayors, by giving them the tools to effectively carry out their tasks on your behalf, the constituent.

I trust that together, the public and private sector, from our schools to our homes, we can rescue our families from the social decline which surrounds us. During this holiday season, remember to recognize your achievements, and those of your family and friends. We must set aside our burdens, and reflect with our families our successes as individuals and as a community. We must remember that through our accomplishments we will find the key to transform our society from the ground up, and achieve the quality of life which all Puerto Ricans deserve.

## 2A TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### Improvements to the San Juan Port

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved a resolution to study the viability of expanding a dredging project in the San Juan Bay. Luis Fortuño, who serves as a member of this committee, succeeded in acquiring the approval of this resolution which instructs the Army Corps of Engineers to determine the possibility of increasing the capacity of the port and improve the navigation routes for ships in the San Juan Bay.

The resolution, approved under federal law, may result in an increase in the efficiency of the

port and improvements in the capacity of entry and exit of cruises in the bay and docking zone. The study, ordered by the legislative committee, will consider the possibility of allowing the Corps of Engineers to work beyond its original tasks to deepen the San Juan Bay to allow for a greater capacity for boats and vessels.

In addition to these efforts on behalf of the development of the San Juan Port, the Resident Commissioner has also obtained \$5.63 million for maintenance dredging.



Stock Photo

### Transportation System for El Morro and San Cristobal

The forts San Felipe del Morro and San Cristobal will soon have a trolley system to transport visitors between both fortifications as part of the United States Program for Alternate Forms of Transportation between Parks and Public Lands. Resident Commissioner, Luis Fortuño was able to have Puerto Rico included among a select group of parks in the National Park System that will receive funds to transport visitors through their facilities.

The creation of this transportation system will allow visitors to these historic landmarks to have a higher

quality experience. These trolleys are expected to travel through the Norzagaray street, through the street



leading to the fort San Felipe del Morro, and through the area surrounding the harbor. This is the second time this year that the San Juan Historic Site has received funds due to the Resident Commissioner's efforts. Under the appropriations process for the Department of Interior, the Resident Commissioner secured \$600,000 for the m. \$640,000 have been allocated to the construction of the transportation system.

### Demands Favorable Conditions for Puerto Rican Consumers Before the FCC

The Federal Communications Commission is considering the adoption of an amendment to its regulations which would result in more than \$30 million annually in infrastructure improvements for Puerto Rico. The amendment provides a support mechanism for Puerto Rico and other insular areas, allowing local telephone companies to build new networks, improve existing facilities, and maintain tariffs at reasonable prices.

In 2003, when this current regulations went into effect, the Island lost millions of dollars in federal assistance for infrastructure and telecommunications. However, in a decision this year, the Commission conceded that these effects are incompatible with the purpose of the Telecommunications Law. The Resident Commissioner, who has been supporting this

amendment since he began his term in Washington, met with the FCC president, Mr. Kevin Martin, where he argued that Puerto Ricans must receive the same level of access to telecommunications services granted to American citizens residing in other parts of the United States.

Luis Fortuño emphasized the importance of establishing concrete conditions to guarantee the quality of telecommunication services in Puerto Rico during the process of transferring control from the Puerto Rico Telephone Company to a foreign company. The Resident Commissioner asked Mr. Kevin Martin to take the necessary measures when authorizing the transaction, to ensure that the telecommunication services in Puerto Rico are offered within a framework of free and just competition.

### 3A VETERANS



Fortuño with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jack Nicholson, participate in the groundbreaking ceremony of the new six floor tower at the Veterans' Hospital.

## New Veteran's Hospital in Puerto Rico

The Resident Commissioner succeeded in having Puerto Rico be included in a bill which authorizes the construction of new medical facilities in the United States for jurisdictions categorized "in greatest need" of a new veteran's hospital. The approved bill recognizes the pressing need to improve the quality of medical services for veterans in Puerto Rico, and includes the island along with other priority states and jurisdictions which are in need of new first rate medical facilities. The legislation also orders the Secretary of the Department of Veteran's Affairs to submit a report on all possible options, including ones that have not been considered in congress, for the construction of a new veteran's hospital in Puerto Rico. Luis Fortuño was also able to have Puerto Rico's needs similarly addressed in the Law of Appropriations on Quality of Military life, Veteran's Affairs, and Related Agencies for fiscal year 2007.

## Intercedes on behalf of Veteran's House

In response to a petition made by the medical director of the Veteran's House in Juana Díaz, Fortuño supported an appeal submitted by said institution in favor of retroactively certifying 60 new beds as of January of 2005. In September of this year, the Department of Veteran's Affairs agreed to the petition made by the Veteran's House allowing it to received nearly half a million dollars in pending invoices. The funds will help improve the facility which provides at-home care for veterans of scarce resources.

## Fortuño Commemorates Spanish Heritage Month

Luis Fortuño was one of the guest speakers at the Department of Veterans Affairs' activity commemorating Hispanic Heritage Month in Washington DC. While in the company of hundreds of veterans of Hispanic origin, Fortuño praised the historic contributions of Hispanics to the Armed Forces as well as the significance of their contribution to the formation of the United States.



Resident Commissioner Luis Fortuño acted as guest speaker during a Hispanic Heritage Month event at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington DC where he discussed the contributions of Hispanics in the military.

## New Tower in the Veteran's Hospital

The Resident Commissioner joined the Hon. Jim Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, at a ceremony in the Veterans' Hospital in Río Piedras, where the groundbreaking ceremony took place in what will be a new six story tower at the hospital. During the activity, Fortuño thanked the President's Administration which allowed for the beginning of construction and the improvements of the physical structure of the hospital. He also emphasized the need for a new veterans' hospital and the importance of new alternatives to address the current lack of space at the National Cemetery in Hato Tejas.

### 3B FEDERAL APPOINTMENTS

## Barbosa Post Office Building

On November 17, 2006, Congressman Luis Fortuño commemorated the naming, in conjunction with officials from the United States Post Office, of the Dr. José Celso Barbosa Post Office in Bayamón, Puerto Rico. This distinction resulted from the Congressman's efforts in the United House of Representatives. H.R. 3440, a bill written and introduced by Fortuño, became Public Law No: 109-253 on August 1, 2006. Dr. José Celso Barbosa (July 27, 1857 – September 21, 1921), was born in Bayamón, Puerto Rico; he was a prominent medical doctor, sociologist, and political leader. Among his many contributions to the island, he is also known as the father of the statehood movement for Puerto Rico.

## New Name for FDA Building in Puerta de Tierra

El Presidente George W. Bush convirtió en ley una legislación presentada por el Comisionado Residente que asignará el nombre de "Andrés Toro Building" al edificio de Investigaciones de la Administración de Drogas y Alimentos FDA (por sus siglas en inglés) en la avenida Fernández Juncos en Puerta de Tierra.

Fortuño presentó el proyecto de ley a solicitud de los empleados y empleadas del FDA en San Juan para honrar la memoria de un gran servidor público que falleció súbitamente mientras fungía como Director de la Oficina de Cumplimiento de la Administración de Drogas y Alimentos en San Juan. Las ejecutorias personales y profesionales de Andrés Toro le ganaron el respeto y admiración de sus colegas y de la industria a la cual regulaba. Andrés Toro se desempeñó también como Director de Investigaciones del FDA en San Juan.

# Concern over Economic Environment

The biggest concern we all share in Puerto Rico is the current state of our economy and the lack of employment opportunities available. It is only logical that we think this way, since our families and our quality of life depend greatly on the growth of our economy and the opportunities that may be available for our youth.

You don't have to be an economist to realize that the economy of Puerto Rico is stagnant and that our growth opportunities are limited. What should be of most concern to us is that we tend to adopt measures that are contrary to those already established and proven in continental U.S., therefore, the results are different.

Between 1996 and 2005 the gross income for Puerto Ricans grew at a rate of 17.5 while those of U.S. residents grew by 21.5 per cent.

Between 2000 and 2004 the growth of the employment rate in the private sector in the state of Florida was of 5.9 per cent, while in Puerto Rico it decreased by .7 per cent. In 2006, unemployment in Puerto Rico is at 11.7 per cent, while in the



U.S. it has dropped to 4.4 percent. For this reason many of our brothers and sisters have had to emigrate in order to get better jobs.

What are our future economic prospects? These don't seem too promising. In the U.S. taxes have been reduced, and the economy has sustained a positive growth for 17 consecutive semesters. In the last fiscal year the U.S. economy has grown at a rate of 3.6 per cent. Meanwhile, in Puerto Rico, taxes have increased to cover government expenses, and our economy has slowed

down, reflecting a growth of less than 1 per cent.

We have to admit that the measures taken have not worked and that we have to implement new strategies for economic development.

We have to reduce the size of government, lower taxes instead of increasing them, and create an environment able to support investments in the private sector. Only if we accomplish this can we improve our economic environment and the quality of life of Puerto Ricans.

## 4B LEGISLATION



# Presents Electoral Bill

The Resident Commissioner presented a bill in Congress aimed at increasing the amount of federal funds allocated to Puerto Rico in order to effectively comply with the conditions set under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). This legislation, approved in the last congressional session, hopes to eliminate the obstacles allowing citizens their right to vote, but failed to provide the necessary economic resources for Puerto Rico to effectively comply with the law's mandate. The bill presented by Fortuño addresses this situation, allowing for Puerto Rico to receive additional funds in proportion to its electoral population and not under the present formula which limit the achievement of these goals.

HAVA was approved in 2002 in order to improve the administration of elections in all states and territories of the United States, and

allocated economic resources to this end. The allocated funds are aimed at improving voting, registration, and voting orientation systems as well as increasing the accessibility of the voting process for the elderly and handicapped. HAVA also provides for the acquisition of electronic voting systems and the modernization of the electoral system.

At the ratification of the HAVA law, Puerto Rico received the least amount of funds proportional to its voting populations among all the states and territories. Though the voting body in Puerto Rico is ranked 27th in the United States, it received less funds than any other state, and an equal quantity to the other territories. The new bill presented by Fortuño would make proportional adjustments and grants Puerto Rico use of the same formula

## Strengthening our Values ... (continues from Cover)

National and local studies show that teaching values and ethics early on during childhood significantly reduces the use of alcohol and drugs, criminal actions, and violence among the youth. It has also been shown that the active participation of the father in the family is an important factor in the prevention of school desertion and criminal acts among children.

Under the slogan: "Your Values Matter!" this informative campaign hopes to create awareness on the importance of observing the six pillars of a responsible person: be dependable, respectful, responsible, just, kind, and a good citizen. These characteristics are vital to protect the family unit and our society from the wave of violence and abuse that surrounds families.

The campaign "Your Values Matter" is an adaptation from a similar campaign which is being implemented throughout hundreds of public and private schools across the nation. Among its many goals, this campaign hopes to incorporate the teaching of values into the school's curriculum so that these six pillars are emphasized through all aspects of our children's lives, starting with the pre-school years and all the way through high school.

To help diffuse this campaign, the Center for Family Strengthening, ESCAPE, a non profit organization dedicated to strengthening the family unit and stabilizing the Puerto Rican household to prevent child abuse, attended his activity in Guaynabo City to provide orientation on their various programs aimed at supporting parents and families that need help.

The second stage of the campaign, "A Man's Promise", is also based on a national campaign sponsored by the federal Justice Department which calls men to promise to never commit, tolerate, or be silent about domestic violence. Fortuño believes that all men are in a position to break the cycles, tear down stereotypes, and educate children from an early age on how to treat women with respect and dignity.

As part of this information campaign, hundreds of men attended his activity held on August 20th to pledge the "Promise". Also, more than 5,000 cards were distributed to those interested in taking the pledge. Furthermore, letters were sent to all majors in the island and organization under the private sector to unite in this information campaign to prevent domestic violence and abuse in our homes.

zations can positively impact our communities and improve our quality of life. The Resident Commissioner is committed to strengthening the participation of our non profit organizations. In 2006, community and faith based liaisons were established in various municipalities, all of which were actively sponsored by the Resident Commissioner's Office and now total over 38 offices.

This past August, Fortuño accompanied the Major of Mayagüez, the honorable José Guillermo Rodríguez, at the inauguration for the Office of Community and Faith Based Liaison in this city. The purpose of this office is to assist community and faith based organizations in identifying federal grants that can allow them to continue their services directly to the communities.

## 5B COMMUNITY BASED

### Angels in Adoption recognition of "Hogar Cuna San Cristobal"

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) provides an opportunity for all Members of Congress to honor the extraordinary work of their constituents who have enriched the lives of foster children and orphans worldwide. CCAI created the Angels in Adoption program, in 1999, as a Congressional press conference to honor outstanding people and organizations in the field of adoption and foster care. The program has since developed into a yearlong public awareness campaign that culminates with Angels being invited to attend a Washington, D.C. awards ceremony, press conference, and evening gala given in their honor. This year, Congressman Luis Fortuño, chose the Hogar Cuna San Cristobal as Puerto Rico's Angel in Adoption. Ms. Ivonne L. Vélez Castro, Executive Director of Hogar Cuna and Mrs. Elza Soler de López, President of the Board came to Washington, D.C. to receive their award.

Hogar Cuna San Cristobal deserves recognition for their work with neglected and abused children in Puerto Rico. They are the first and only organization, on the island, that provides a temporary home for children who are candidates for adoption. Hogar Cuna was created out of a desperate need for children, who often remained in temporary situations and who were never placed in a stable, permanent family. Hogar Cuna services children from all areas of Puerto Rico; the majority of whom are referred by the Department of Family in Puerto Rico. They also work closely with women who have decided that adoption is the best alternative for their child. The caring and dedicated staff provide counseling and support services for these women who are struggling through a very difficult decision making process. What makes their work so profound is that not only are the children well cared for in every aspect; most eventually are adopted into a permanent home and family. The variety of services is innumerable and reaches to those who wish to adopt a child. Finally, Hogar Cuna offers workshops that help parents, families, community groups and churches learn prevention methods to avoid the indelible cycle of maltreatment and abuse of the innocent and vulnerable.



In this picture, congressman Jim Oberstar, Executive Director Hogar Cuna San Cristobal, Ivonne L. Velez Castro, President of the board of Directors, Elza Soler de Lopez, next to Senators Mary Landrieu, and Larry Garza participate of award ceremony honoring outstanding people and organizations in the field of adoption and foster care.

## Empowering our Municipalities... (continues from Cover)

rent housing.

In Caguas, the Corporation "Milagros de Amor" secured a \$21,202.00 subsidy to continue offering counseling services to individuals of scarce resources on opportunities on how to acquire or rent housing. Last year, this organization helped over 300 individuals, and found permanent housing for 22.

In San Juan, the community group One-Stop Career Center obtained a \$24,807.00 subsidy. This organization offers services related to the selling and acquisition of properties.

In Ponce, the Ponce Neighborhood Housing Services secured a \$35,646.00 subsidy to help in its financial and budget planning consulting services, also aimed at the acquisition of housing.

These three organizations demonstrate how community and faith based organi-

## Center for Constituent Services :

### Resident Commissioner Offers Services in Communities

In hopes of providing his constituents with better services, Resident Commissioner Luis Fortuño, inaugurated a new Center for Constituent Services in August of this year. The Center for Constituent Services is designed to facilitate and allow greater access to the services provided by the Resident Commissioner's office in a swift and efficient manner. The Center serves as a mobile booth which is easily transported and installed in different locations.

The Center for Constituent Services was inaugurated in Ponce. Nearly 200 citizens from 25 municipalities came to Plaza del Caribe during the week of the August 21st to request help from the Resident Commissioner's office on matters related to veterans' affairs, Social Security, Medicare, immigration, and others.



**Citizens visit the Resident Commissioner's new Center for Constituent Services in Plaza del Caribe in Ponce where they can obtain assistance with issues concerning federal agencies.**

During October, the Center for Constituent Services offered its services from San Patricio Plaza in Guaynabo, helping hundreds of citizens who requested help from federal agencies with their pending cases. The event also served as an opportunity to disseminate information on strategies to strengthen the family unit and values, in hopes of addressing the serious issue of violence against children and women in our society.

By the end of 2006, the Resident Commissioner's office will have assisted in over 1,500 cases related to veterans affairs, social security, medicare, federal grants, and others. The Center for Constituent Services will continue to move around the island in hopes of allowing greater access for constituents by providing these services directly to their own communities.

## Second Workshop on Citizenship

On November 18th, the Resident Commissioner held his Second Workshop on Citizenship at the Metropolitan University in Bayamón. Hundreds attended the event, which provide assistance and counseling services to permanent residents in Puerto Rico, who wish to apply for naturalization and obtain United States citizenship.

This past summer, Fortuño participated in the naturalization ceremony sponsored by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the Fort San Cristobal in Old San Juan, where he handed out certificates of citizenship to those who participated in the First Workshop on Citizenship held on September 2005.



## A Man's PROMISE...

I pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about domestic violence.

I pledge to challenge other men to recognize that they can be powerful without making others powerless.

I pledge to teach our sons how to step up and to encourage men to work together with women to end domestic violence in every community and across the nation.

**WE ARE AT YOUR SERVICE**

**TEL: 1-866-266-6678 (Toll free)**  
**e-mail: [luis.fortuno@mail.house.gov](mailto:luis.fortuno@mail.house.gov)**

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