

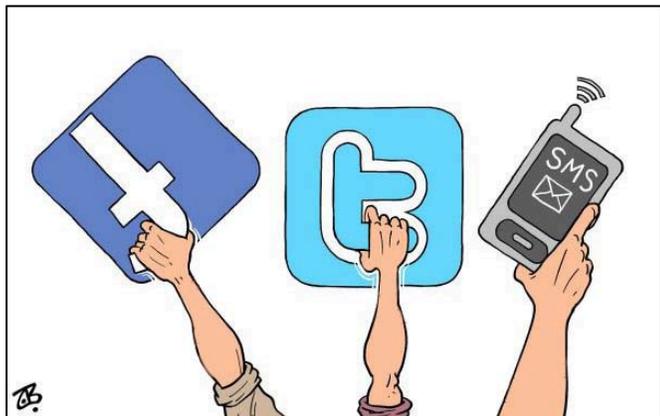
# ***Latino Interns Are Politically Wired at the State Capitol***

*Young Staffers Use Cell Phones, Text Messages, and Apps to Move Policy*

By Pablo Rodriguez

*"Social media is empowering the new generation of young Latino's. We must utilize all technological mediums to realize the dream for California's young scholars."*

**Assemblymember Gil Cedillo (D-Los Angeles)**



**College students working as interns in the offices of State Assemblymembers Gil Cedillo, and Luis Alejo are playing an instrumental role in determining the future academic careers of undocumented students in California.** On March 15<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of students are expected to descend on the California State Capitol in support of the California DREAM Act bill that would allow California AB 540 students an opportunity to compete for state scholarships and loans at public colleges and universities.

The visibility and legislative tactics the interns are providing in support of the bill are familiar; Rally at

11:00am followed by a press conference at 11:30am; from 1:00pm – 6:00pm visits to legislators will take place concurrently with the California DREAM Act hearing before the Committee on Higher Education. Initiated and overseen by the Assemblymembers' college interns, a Facebook event page, e-mail blasts, and tweets including an online link to RSVP for the March 15<sup>th</sup> events in Sacramento were created with Latino youth the specific target. What is different today, as compared to even five years ago, is how Latino youth are accessing, and sharing information they find online.

**Ask any Latino youth at the Capitol on March 15<sup>th</sup> how they received word about the March 15<sup>th</sup> events, how they RSVP'd, how they organized their carpool with friends, and chances are they will show you their cell phone.** From 2009 to 2010, the share of Latinos ages 18 to 29 who were online jumped from 75 percent to 85 percent, and the share with cell phones rose nine-percentage points from 81 percent to 90 percent, according to the February 9, 2011 survey findings from the Pew Hispanic Center. When analysis is limited to cell phone owners, Latinos show higher likelihoods than whites of using three of four cell phone data applications: 1) Internet, 2) e-mail, and 3) text/or use instant messaging. While there continues to be a significant gap between whites and Latinos, 65 percent vs. 45 percent, in terms of broadband use at home; the equalizer is clearly the cell phone.

From 2000 to 2010, California's Latino population grew to 37.6 percent while the white population fell to 40 percent. Latinos under 18 years of age increased 17 percent, while the number of non-Hispanic white children fell 21 percent over the past decade, according to the 2010 Census data released March 8<sup>th</sup>. The census results released Tuesday will inform how California's political districts will be redrawn later this year. Redistricting has typically been a politically driven task that state legislators would use to protect members of their own party. But this year, the job of redrawing lines has been turned over to the new 14-member bipartisan Citizens Redistricting Commission. And unlike past years, awkwardly shaped districts engineered to favor one party over another, often by geographically dividing minority groups will not be permitted.<sup>21</sup>

The rapid expansion in California's Latino population has set the stage to transform not only the state's political balance but the environment in which political campaigns are run. Following the lead of the interns of the Assemblymembers' Cedillo and Alejo, political parties promoting any local or state campaigns will have to resonate with a potent constituency of Latino youth, who can utilize their cell phones to successfully navigate the internet, text messages, and apps to mobilize their friends and family in support of causes they believe in.

<sup>21</sup> [The mobile phone has become the favored communication hub for the majority of American teens](#) | Pew Research | 2009