

***DEADLINE EXTENDED to January 30!* - SIGN ON TO THE OPEN LETTER TO BARACK OBAMA CONCERNING THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN EL SALVADOR**

The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections in El Salvador (which includes the Share Foundation, CISPES, US-El Salvador Sister Cities, and Voices on the Border) is collecting organizational signatures for an open letter to president Barack Obama related to the upcoming elections in El Salvador. The letter calls for US neutrality and non-intervention in the elections, and asserts that immigration policy will not be affected by the results; it also pledges that the undersigned organizations will take action should the State Department or Congressional members attempt to sway the results of the elections. *We plan to publish the letter after the inauguration of Obama and a month or so before the March 15 presidential elections in El Salvador.*

We hope to get this letter published in the main newspaper of El Salvador during the first week of February 2009. **If your organization wishes to sign on to the letter, send an email to burke@cispes.org or call 202 521-2510. The new deadline for signers is January 30.** *This is an organizational sign-on letter and not meant for individuals.*

We also hope that organizations signing the letter can make a contribution towards the cost of the paid ad in El Salvador. For local groups with a budget less than \$50,000 we're asking for a contribution of \$50; for national organizations with a budget between \$50,000 and \$200,000, we're asking for a contribution of \$100; for those with budgets over \$200,000, we're asking for \$150-\$300.

For updates on the Salvadoran elections check out: www.freeandfairelections.wordpress.com, www.share-elsalvador.org, www.cispes.org and www.us-elsalvador-sisters.org

An open letter to Barack Obama concerning the upcoming Elections in El Salvador

Dear President Obama,

We the undersigned write to congratulate you on your historic victory and wish you the best as you confront the difficult challenges we face as a global community. We also wish to bring to your attention the equally historic elections scheduled for March 2009 in El Salvador, which promise to be the most contested elections since the 1992 Peace Accords.

We write now to express our strong belief that U.S. government officials should refrain from using fear and misinformation to influence voters in El Salvador and instead should honor and respect the will of the Salvadoran people. We wish to express our full support for free and fair electoral process El Salvador, and to this end, we firmly state the following:

- **The proper position of the U.S. government is one of neutrality and respect for El Salvador's independent democratic process, thus allowing the Salvadoran people to freely decide, as a matter of personal conscience and conviction, which parties and candidates they will vote for.** El Salvador and the United States have a very close relationship - nearly 25% of El Salvador's population lives in the United States, and the remittances that these immigrants send home comprise approximately 20% of El Salvador's GDP. *As we work to strengthen the rights of immigrants in the United States, we also recognize that this close relationship can be used to manipulate those same Salvadorans when elections occur in their country.*

- **We pledge to take action to ensure that the US government remains neutral during the campaign leading up to the March 2009 Presidential vote and respects the Salvadoran people's choice regardless of the result.** In 2004, Bush Administration officials made threats that they would retaliate diplomatically and against the status of Salvadoran immigrants if an opposition party won the election. They further threatened to restrict the remittances those immigrants send to their families. However, Members of the U.S. Congress, as well as a variety of international organizations, rejected those statements as false and asserted that U.S. immigration policy is not determined by the results of foreign elections. *We will work to ensure that the U.S. Congress and State Department stand by El Salvador by making a commitment against partisan intervention in El Salvador's 2009 electoral campaigns.*

- **The United States' immigration policy will not be influenced by the party or candidate that wins the presidential elections in March 2009.** We acknowledge that already in 2008, radio and television advertisements in El Salvador have proclaimed that an opposition party victory would threaten the immigration status of Salvadorans living in the US, as well as remittances they send home to their families. *We denounce such propaganda campaigns as false and call on the U.S. Embassy to clarify that there are no threats to immigrants related to the 2009 elections results.*

We congratulate the Salvadoran people on their quest for free and fair elections in 2009 and we look forward to a future that holds peace and shared prosperity for El Salvador, the United States, and the rest of the global community.

Initial signers:

Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)
US-El Salvador Sister-Cities
Voices on the Border

The SHARE Foundation, Building a New El Salvador Today