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Featured Speaker: "Hon. Alex Padilla"

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LEAD Original Programming

"Featured Speaker: Hon. Alex Padilla" (2019)

START – 00:00:00

[Music]

>> [Foreign language spoken] and welcome to the next installment of LEAD media programming. From studio 54 campus of California State University San Bernardino, the digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders, and community activists and advocates taking our message directly to the people, to the [foreign language spoken]. Thank you for sharing our common interest in the analysis, discussion, critique, dissemination, and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host Dr. Enrique Murillo Junior, and this episode is a syndicated replay from season 10 of LEAD summit 2019. The theme that year was [foreign language spoken] everyone counts. For the U.S to create a positive future, it will require a Latino citizenry that more greatly participates in the American democratic process, and that is poised to shape the U.S political landscape through voting and civic engagement. One of our featured speakers was the honorable Alex Padilla who at the time was serving as the California secretary of state and had modernized the office, increased voter registration and participation, and strengthened voting rights. In a historic turn just a year and a half later in December 2020 secretary of state Alex Padilla, the son of Mexican immigrants who worked as a cook and a house cleaner, would go on to become the first Latino United States senator to represent California. Continue and enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our LEAD sponsors and partners, planners, volunteers, speakers, panelists, the production team, affiliates, and town hall chapters. We commend them all for lifting their voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you [foreign language spoken]. Now it's my distinct pleasure to introduce Jessie Felix [assumed spelling] who will introduce our next speaker. Jessie serves as the executive director of the associated students incorporated here on our campus, and is a doctoral candidate cohort 10 in the educational leadership program. So, Jessie, all yours.

[Applause]

>> It's actually my pleasure to introduce to you Alex Padilla, the California secretary of state. Alex Padilla was sworn in as California secretary of state on January 5, 2015, becoming the first ever Latino elected to the position. He is committed to modernizing the office, increasing voter registration and participation, and strengthening voter rights. In 2018 Secretary Padilla oversaw the state's historical general election where 64.5% of registered voters cast a ballot. This was the highest voter turnout of registered voters in a gubernatorial general election since 1982. Working with statewide partners, California

just reached a historic 20 million registered voters. To expand voting rights to more Californians in 2015, the secretary sponsored legislation to establish vote centers, expand early voting, and implemented same day conditional voter registration through the Voter's Choice Act. He also sponsored the new "motor voter" act which will eventually register to vote every eligible California citizen who goes to a DMV office to get a driver's license or renew one, potentially registering millions. Padilla's parents immigrated from Mexico and raised their family in the working class community of Pacoima, California. Padilla attended local public schools and went on to graduate from Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. In 1999 at the age of 26 he was elected to the Los Angeles city council to represent the same East San Fernando Valley community where he grew up. In 2001 his colleagues elected him to the first of three terms as council president, becoming the youngest member and the first Latino to serve in this capacity. In 2006 Padilla was elected to the California state senate. He was reelected in 2010 and over the course of eight years Padilla has established a diverse and groundbreaking legislative record. Padilla lives with his wife, Angela, and their three sons in the San Fernando Valley. It is my pleasure to welcome the honorable Alex Padilla.

[Applause]

>> Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Good morning, everybody.

>> Good morning.

>> [Foreign language spoken] are we also awake out there? Time for another cup of coffee? It is indeed my honor to be part of the program today. I want to thank Dr. Murillo for the invitation and for his leadership. 10 years of the LEAD summit. Let's give him a round of applause.

[Applause]

And I want to thank all of you. I want to thank all of you for not just being here this morning, but for your courage. What do I mean by that? It takes courage. You chose to be here today. You chose to participate maybe as a first time participant. Maybe you've been here for many, many years. Nobody makes you be here. You choose to be here because you know these convenings, these conversations, that this work is so important. I mean just think about the title. Right? Latino education and advocacy days. I'm so glad that both education and advocacy are in the title because you cannot have good education without good advocacy. And we could not have good advocacy without good education. So there is not just a celebration going on here today. There is a purpose. So thank you for being here, for the courage to stand up and demand, insist, and be part of a better community here on the campus and throughout the inland empire. Give yourselves a round of applause. So you heard a little bit of my background in the introduction. I'd like to share a little bit more before I get in to the specifics of why I'm here today talking about elections and voting and even census participation in 2020. As you heard, I am a proud son of immigrants. My parents are from Mexico. They are

actually from different parts of Mexico. My dad is from the state of Jalisco. My mom was from the state of Chihuahua. She came separately. They came separately. They actually met in Los Angeles. Right? Like so many others, my dad came here with his brothers. Gave himself a year to find a job [foreign language spoken]. My mom was here with one of her cousins at the same time. They not only found jobs. They found each other. They fell in love. And before deciding to get married and start a family, they decided to apply for green cards. So I thank the United States government for saying yes because if they would have said no I would have been probably giving this speech in Tijuana somewhere. My parents got their green cards. They got married. And they settled in to the San Fernando Valley and started to raise a family. You know, my parents worked for almost 40 years, for about 40 years, before earning their retirement. For 40 years my father worked as a short order cook. So whenever you go to a diner like a Denny's or an IHOP and you order pancakes and scrambled eggs, think about who's making that breakfast. That's what my dad did for 40 years. For those same 40 years my mother used to clean houses. But together they just didn't work hard, hard work, honest work. They raised a family. I have an older sister who has gone from being a teacher's assistant to a teacher to a principal and now she works in the administration for the Los Angeles Unified School District. I have a younger brother who works as chief of staff to one of the members of the Los Angeles city council. So we're all in public service in some way, shape, or form, and that is not a coincidence. That is a complete reflection of the values of my parents. Always insisting on education, and always insisting on helping others.

[Applause]

And I get to stand before you today as California secretary of state. I -- I want you to think about that for just a second. In one generation our family has gone from being immigrants, hard working immigrants, cooks and house cleaners, to I get to stand before you as a constitutional officer in the most populous state in the nation. The American dream is still alive.

[Applause]

The American dream, as you know, is sometimes under attack, but it is still alive because of the work that is done in rooms like this around the country and over the course of our history. You know, I share my story proudly, but I also share my story humbly because I know that each and every person in this room has a story that is just as powerful and just as important. Whether you're here today as a student, as a parent, as a faculty member or administrator, as a community leader, whatever brought you in to this room today, I know that you have a story. Not just a life story, but a story of what you and your family have done to contribute to the community and to this country. And, even better yet, each and every one of you has a story of what you and your family have yet to do to contribute to this community, to the state of California, and to the United States of America. Because guess what people? I'm going to tell you something you already know. Latinos and immigrants help make America great. Always have. Always will.

[Applause]

But let me share something with you that you probably don't know. I mean you heard this beautiful introduction. Los Angeles city council. Council president. State senate. Secretary of state. Being involved with government and politics is honestly the last thing I thought I'd be doing when I was growing up. You understand. You were once in high school. Or talk to a high schooler today. Ask them what they think of politics. Or politicians. Now don't answer that question. This is a family forum. But I was like that too [foreign language spoken]. Right? If you would have asked me what I thought of politics and politicians back when I was in high school, corruption, greed. Something I could not relate to. Why would I want to be a part of that? So, you know, I decided to pursue two dreams when I was growing up. One. To play first base for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Go Dodgers. It's opening day. But I was smart enough to have a backup plan. And because my favorite subject was math, I followed the advice of some teachers and counselors and pursue engineering. So I came home after four winters in Massachusetts with a mechanical engineering degree. And a little walk down memory lane for some of us that -- with a little bit more gray in the audience. Do you remember the year 1994? Right. First of all, the economy in southern California in the early '90s was not a very good one for people looking for engineering jobs. But second. In November of 1994 -- this coming November's the 25th anniversary of a momentous event not just in my life, but in the history and trajectory of the state of California. On the November 1994 ballot there appeared a measure known as proposition 187. Those of us who were woke at the time remember how important that was. A measure that sought to deny immigrants and children of immigrants eligibility from public services. Public services meaning if you did not have health insurance you couldn't go see a doctor at a county clinic when you were sick. Depending on who you ask, it also meant that maybe children could not attend public schools because public education is a public service. Let me abruptly remind us all that proposition 187 passed in California before it was deemed unconstitutional by the courts. It passed. It wasn't even close. At the time, my parents had been here for not quite 30 years, but close to it. It's what got them to finally decide to begin the naturalization process and to become citizens. And if you ask them, it wasn't to just [foreign language spoken] right, just for our protection and security, it was out of recognition that if we did not further engage in the political process we would continue to be a target. And they weren't the only ones. Millions across California did. And our politics have changed as a result. But it wasn't just my parents and their peers. It was young people like me who grew up very cynical about politics. Why should I get involved? What does it matter? Does it make a difference? To realize, hey, maybe my high school government teacher was right. If we live in this democracy, we're all equals, right? We all have a voice. Our voice is our votes [foreign language spoken] but only if you exercise it. So how could I in good conscience complain, be cynical, if I, someone who's eligible, was not registered and voting in each and every election? So that was a turning point for me. That's when I decided to get engaged. And I also applied a little math lesson to my purpose. So I'm going to give you all a pop quiz right here, right now. What's greater? 1 or 10? It's not a trick question. 10 is the right

answer. I heard two people respond. All right. Let's try this again. What's greater? 10 or 100?

>> 100.

>> What's greater? 100 or 1,000?

>> 1,000.

>> So the same lesson that applies in our math class applies in our democracy and in our politics. If I register and vote in every election, that's my voice. But if I organize and get 10 people, 10 family members, to register and vote, our voice is heard that much louder. If I can go to my school or my community and get 100 or 1,000 people registered and voting in every election, our voice is even that much louder. And again nothing you don't already know, but that is the spirit that I see in this room today. Each one of us cares individually, but we're coming together. We're organizing. We're organizing this campus, the greater community, the region, and we are a powerful voice in the state of California and in the United States of America. And so imagine the opportunity to take these experiences, take these visions, and serve as the chief elections officer for the great state of California. It's a tremendous opportunity to help through the institutions give each and every community a voice. It's not just about how do we register more people. Let's make it easy. Let's remove barriers for eligible people to be registered to vote. And remove barriers for people to actually cast their ballot. So yes. If you Google the name and look at the bio and the official website, you can read more in detail about things like online voter registration, automatic voter registration, same day voter registration, preregistration for 16 and 17 year olds. There's no wonder that we've broken the record for voter registration in the state of California. And we're not looking back. And it's no wonder, no coincidence, that you'll see the reforms that we're championing to give voters more options of when, where, and how to vote. Vote by mail. Early voting. Voting anywhere in the county that's convenient to you. That's our agenda in California for the benefit of California voters, but to serve as contrast to what we see happening in far too many states. I dare you to Google voting rights and North Carolina and see what you find. I dare you to Google voting rights and Alabama or Georgia or Ohio, Wisconsin, and see what you find. California has an opportunity and an obligation to show a better way. But I want to be very, very clear about something. I want to be very clear about something, and this is I think the biggest point that I have to offer this morning. When we talk about getting more people to register, and increasing turnout rates, as much as I love math, it's not about the numbers. It's not just about the numbers. Because you see we all have access to data that tells us, "Well, who is it that tends to be registered to vote?" And who is it that tends to be eligible, but not registered to vote? Of the more than 20 million Californians now that are registered to vote, who is it that tends to turn out every single election? And who is it that may be registered to vote, but only votes once in a while? It's pretty clear. The eligible, but unregistered, and the registered, but infrequent voter is disproportionately low income, young people, and communities of color. It's us. So if we truly want to seize our power and influence the agenda of San Bernardino city and county, the state of California, and the United States

of America, we have to seize our power by registering and voting in every single election. And that's what our policies are doing. And throughout the course of the day we'll hear from subject matter experts in much, much more detail about what that's taken and what that's leading to. Throughout the course of the day you're also going to hear about another item that's important to me. The decennial census. Dr. Murillo made a pitch on it earlier. Bottom line is this. In addition to registering and voting, in addition to organizing all year round, every year, not just when the election is upon us, the census every 10 years is hugely critical for our community. Census data is what drives, yes, federal funding foremost for the next 10 years. So if you want to make sure that the community receives its fair share of housing dollars, healthcare dollars, education dollars, on and on and on, we need to make sure that every Californian is counted in the 2020 census. But census data also drives reapportionment. So if we want our fair share of representation in Congress, we need to make sure every Californian is counted in the 2020 census. And census data also drives redistricting. Right? Now we're getting our political scientist geek on. When we redraw the lines every 10 years to balance populations for legislative districts, for congressional districts, we rely on census data. So if there's a census under count, we can't draw the districts properly, and we undermine one person, one vote. We undermine our fundamental voting rights unless every Californian gets counted in the 2020 census. So we're all going to have a lot of work to do going in to 2020. We're going to organize. We're going to register. We're going to vote. And we're going to make time to make sure we participate in the census. It's been a tremendous, tremendous honor for me to be here today because as I sat here during the welcoming remarks we were reminded of the powerful leadership and legacy of Tomas Rivera. What a story. Later today you'll hear from one of the living legends not just in the Latino community across the country, but in the United States of America, Rosie Castro, who I had an opportunity to meet a year and a half ago in San Antonio, Texas. What a powerful story. It's been my honor to share my story. I need you to share yours and to live up to the potential of the story of each and every one of you. God bless you, and thank you very, very much.

[Applause]

>> So here okay. We got a couple questions for you. All right. The first one will be from [inaudible] where you at?

>> Good morning, Secretary.

>> Good morning.

>> My name is Luis Velasco Miranda [assumed spelling] I am a student from the Puente project from [inaudible] college. I'll soon be transferring to UCR this fall. I also served as --

[Applause]

Thank you. I also served as student trustee for the Riverside Community College district in 2017. And my question to you is, taking in to consideration how large our student -- college student population is in California, how can we ensure that every college campus will have a voting center for the upcoming elections? And how can you include the students to participate in that process?

>> Okay. Great. So in case you didn't hear or understand the question, as I understood it it's how can we advocate, especially having the students organizing -- advocate for voting centers to be sighted on college and university campuses throughout the state. Because so many voters are students on campuses. It's community colleges, UCs and CSUs and even privates. And I love the question because it makes perfect sense to do exactly that. So we have a two part effort going on. Number one. You can chime in legislatively. There's actually legislation working its way through that would require colleges and universities to have a voting location on their campus. You can chime in in support of that legislation. But in the meantime there's no prohibition on it. So we all can and should be working locally with your county elections office, specifically the registrar of voters, and help make the case of why it makes sense. Both because of not just the students that are on the campus, but all the employees of a campus like Cal State San Bernardino, all the faculty members, administrators, and frankly the surrounding community. This is a hub of the community. There happens to be a lot of good parking too. Right? And access to public transportation. All the ideal things you would want in a voting location. So let's make sure that the registrar of the voters are hearing the interests, hearing the demand, of the community to sight polling places and vote centers on our campuses.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Secretary of State, we have one more question from you, and this one will come from YouTube.

>> All right.

[Music]

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

>> Love that question. Before I get to my answer, I get chills whenever I see new citizens celebrating their citizenship and engaging because I remember when my parents were going through the process. If you know anybody who's gone through the process, if you've gone through the process, you remember like studying the flashcards. Right? Who was the first president of the United States? Why are there 50 stars on the flag? I remember how nervous my mom was when she got the letter to come in for the

interview. So it's -- participating in naturalization ceremonies are very special for me too. But, to answer the question, do you need an ID for a license to vote in California? The answer is no. We are not a voter ID state. Hand clap for California. With one little exception, but let me explain. It's not as bad as it sounds. So when we register to vote, whether it's on paper or online, right, you ask for all your basic information. Your name. Your address. Your date of birth. Signature. You know, if you want to choose a political party. Do you want to vote by mail? In there it asks you for either your license or ID number or for your social security number. Those are only used to make sure that we don't have duplicate, you know, Alex Padillas on the voter rolls. There's two different Alex Padillas, well fine. If it's the same social security number we know it's the same person. When you register to vote for the first time, if you don't add that information the first time you go vote, you'll be asked just for the verification purposes. But, other than that, no voter ID requirement in the state of California. Don't let that be a barrier. If a poll worker asks you for ID, remind them of the law and call it in. Call the county. Call the secretary of state's office. And we'll make sure that the poll workers know the rules. All right. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Let's give it up. Let's give it up for him.

[Applause]

Okay. At this moment we want to present the honorable Alex Padilla with a small token of our affection. If we can stand up and show our respect. Stand up for a moment.

[Applause]

Alex, for your accomplishments and lifetime service to our community, we would like to honor you today with our Latino education advocacy medallion of honor.

[Applause]

[Foreign Language Spoken]

>> It's a tremendous, tremendous honor, and -- since they gave me a couple more minutes, just some brief remarks in Spanish for our Spanish speaking brothers and sisters in the audience, and those watching through technology.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Applause]

END – 00:33:38