



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Adriano Espaillat

## U.S. League of Dominican-American Elected Officials Laud President Obama's Nomination of Thomas Perez for Labor Secretary, Nation's First Cabinet Nomination of Dominican Heritage

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT March 11, 2013

The U.S. League of Dominican-American Elected Officials, led by New York State Senator Adriano Espaillat (D-Washington Heights) praised President Obama's selection of Assistant Attorney General and Justice Department Civil Rights Division head Thomas Perez as nominee for U.S. Labor Secretary. If confirmed, Perez would be the country's first Cabinet Secretary of Dominican descent.

In his current position, Perez has been a staunch defender of civil rights, and has worked to oppose voter ID laws designed to restrict minority election turnout. In his previous position as Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Commissioner, Perez enacted tough new consumer protections against foreclosure, vigorously enforced safety and wage violations, and promoted workforce development initiatives. Perez is a trailblazer and lifelong public servant who has proven his commitment to social justice.

"Thomas Perez is a true American success story, and an inspiration to the nearly 1.5 million people of Dominican heritage living in our country," **said New York State Senator Adriano Espaillat, Chair of the New York State Senate Latino Caucus.** "Like many Dominican families, Perez's parents fled the brutal and repressive Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic to seek a better life in the U.S. – initially settling in the Upper Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights that has become the heart of the Dominican diaspora. Through education and hard work, he has risen through the ranks of public service, and has spent his career safeguarding the rights many Americans take for granted. Perez is already a role model for children of Dominican heritage, but his confirmation as U.S. Secretary of Labor will be nothing

short of a milestone for our community.”

The U.S. Dominican population is principally concentrated in the Northeast; the top states by population are New York, New Jersey, Florida, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Nearly half of the U.S. Dominican population immigrated in the 1990s or later; they now comprise the fifth largest Latino or Hispanic group.

Senator Espaillat also addressed the significance of this nomination in the context of pending federal immigration reform.

“Millions of law-abiding, tax-paying and patriotic immigrants are living in the shadows because Washington gridlock has stymied meaningful immigration reform,” **said Senator Espaillat**. “It’s time to offer our country’s Latino immigrants a path forward, to empower them to pursue the American dream, and allow their children to seek higher education. As President Obama works to correct the shameful failings in our immigration laws, Thomas Perez’s experience, and commitment to public service will make him an invaluable asset to the administration. I commend the President for his terrific choice for Labor Secretary, and will work to mobilize the Dominican-American community to support his confirmation.”

“As Maryland’s Labor Secretary, Thomas Perez was an exceptional public servant who worked hard to protect foreclosure victims, low-income workers and other vulnerable members of our community,” **said Providence, Rhode Island Mayor Angel Taveras**. “I know he will make us equally proud as U.S. Labor Secretary.”

"This nomination marks a historic moment for Dominican Americans who have made this country their home,” said **New York City Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**. “I commend president Obama for nominating a fighter for human rights and social justice to this important post. I hope to see Thomas Perez furthering the progress made on immigrant workers' rights and pushing strong on increasing the national minimum wage."

“Thomas Perez is a trailblazer for our community and has already served his country with distinction,” **said New York Assemblymember Gabriela Rosa**. “Under his leadership, I know our nation will make progress in protecting and expanding the rights of immigrants and workers.”

“The Dominican-American community is excited by this historic nomination,” **said Maryland House of Delegates Member Joseline Pena-Melnyk**. “Thomas Perez will be a determined advocate for our community, and for all Americans. I call on the Senate to confirm this immensely qualified nominee so he can begin to move our country forward on labor and immigration issues.”

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*The U.S. League of Dominican Elected Officials includes over 40 members from 7 states and territories, representing mayors, city council members and state legislators.*