

September 15, 2009

*Members of Santa Fe Youthworks Discuss Their Experiences at CHCI's Annual Policy Conference*

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Ben Ray Luján participated in a discussion on Hispanics in the green economy at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's Annual Policy Conference. Rep. Luján helped to organize the event, and he invited Dominic Cantu and Douglas Rael, who work with Youthworks green program, which focuses on placing youths in clean energy jobs. The young men discussed their experiences as young Hispanics working in an emerging clean energy economy.

“The Green Economy and Renewable Energy Task Force and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus are committed to ensuring that Latinos are included in this discussion, and in any and all related legislation,” said Rep. Luján. “But the fight doesn't stop at legislation and it doesn't stop at Washington. It is important that we translate the work in our nation's capitol to work in our state capitols, to initiatives in our local schools and businesses, to efforts in our own hometowns. We must continue to fight for the Latino community in the months and years to come as we head into the clean energy future. This is why I'm so excited by the young men here today from my district in Santa Fe, New Mexico--Dominic Cantu and Douglas Rael. These

young men have taken the clean energy movement and translated it into true accomplishments for their own lives and their own communities.”

“This feels like the opportunity of a lifetime for me,” said Dominic Cantu of Youthworks. “I am honored to have Rep. Luján take an active interest in my life and what youth are doing in New Mexico. This experience has changed my life forever.”

Rep. Luján worked with Youthworks last spring when he participated in a project where Youthworks, in partnership with the Santa Fe Area Home Builders Association, Habitat for Humanity, and the Santa Fe Community College, broke ground on a Habitat for Humanity home being built completely green in an effort to train at-risk youth in green collar jobs.

Santa Fe Youthworks green programs focus on green jobs skills training for careers in fields such as green buildings construction, energy efficiency and weatherization, sustainability, conservation, and river restoration.

At the conference, Rep. Luján, Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus’ Green Economy and Renewable Energy Task Force, highlighted task force’s efforts on the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. With the support of his task force and his colleagues on the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Rep. Luján was able to work with Edward Markey, Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, and incorporate language into the Innovation Hubs section of ACES that supports Hispanic Serving Institutions

and Tribal Colleges. Rep. Luján also worked with the CHC, the Congressional Black Caucus and Henry Waxman, Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, to incorporate language into the bill that directed funding for clean energy job training and education programs targeted for to low income and minority groups.

“The clean energy movement has tremendous momentum and potential, and the success of Youthworks is just one example of the positive impact that clean energy can have on communities across the country,” said Rep. Luján, “As we look to grow our clean energy economy, I hope that other communities use the work that is being done in New Mexico as an example of how we can create jobs, help youths and move toward energy independence.”