



**Title:** *Protecting LatinX Voting Rights: Voter Registration  
During a Critical Election Year*

**Date:** September 8, 2016

**Time:** *2:15 PM to 3:30 PM*

**Moderator**

Katherine Culliton-González  
Chair, Voting Rights Committee  
Hispanic National Bar Association  
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**Panelists:**

Julie Fernandes  
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Sonia Antolec  
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Chris Melody Fields-Figueredo  
Manager, Legal Mobilization & Strategic Campaigns  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil and Human Rights  
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Washington, DC

INVITED: María Urbina  
Vice President of National Politics and Campaigns  
Voro Latino  
Washington, DC

## **HNBA Voting Rights Panel: Protecting Latino Voting Rights in 2016:**

### **Getting and Staying on the Rolls**

The *potential* political power of the Latino community in the 2016 presidential election is tremendous. There are 27.3 million Latino citizens over 18, comprising nearly 12 percent of eligible voters. There has been a “surge” in naturalization and voter registration applications among Latinos who want to vote against one candidate has espoused views and policy proposals that would directly harm the community. Yet they may be faced with restrictions on their ability to register and vote, while others already on the rolls may face “purging” or other barriers to stay on the rolls and have their vote counted. This panel is part of a series by HNBA’s influential Voting Rights Committee, and it will focus on protection of the rights to voter registration and participation at this critical moment in history.

The HNBA Voting Rights Committee has been increasing its activities and training more Latino/a lawyers to protect voting rights, because the increasing *potential* political power of Latinos has been met with a backlash against the community’s voting rights. 2016 is the first presidential election without the full protections of the Voting Rights Act since it was passed in 1965. 26 states have recently enacted or proposed new restrictions in voting, many of which disparately impact Latinos. Participants in this CLE will learn about the legal landscape supporting restrictions on the right to vote, which HNBA is working to change through litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. They will learn that on June 25, 2013, in the case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court held that the preclearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) were no longer constitutional. Preclearance meant that jurisdictions with a history of discrimination in voting could not enact any changes to their voting procedures until they were precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice or a federal court. As Justice Ginsberg predicted in her dissent, now that the protective umbrella of preclearance has been taken down, a deluge of new restrictions on voting have been enacted since the *Shelby* decision. Many of these restrictions are found in the details of the laws and procedures governing voter registration, including new qualifications rules requiring documentary proof of citizenship. Other new restrictions involve voting list maintenance with inaccurate databases or irregular procedures, known as “purging.” In many states, these new restrictions impact individual voters as well as the groups that help them register. As Latinos seek to register and vote in this critical election, they may need assistance in navigating the process to ensure that they can get and stay on the rolls.

This panel of national and local voting rights experts will help more Latino/a lawyers learn how to provide assistance to voters and to work with their local election officials to ensure free, fair and accessible elections. In addition, the panel will discuss how the Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore the VRA and help protect against discriminatory restrictions of the right to vote.

## Tab 1 – Biographies or CVs

### **Katherine Culliton-González**



Katherine Culliton-González is one of our nation’s leading voting rights attorneys and has chaired the HNBA Voting Rights Committee since 2012. She has spearheaded increasing HNBA advocacy for voting rights, leading participation in amicus briefs in key appellate litigation, and ongoing training of HNBA lawyers to protect the most fundamental rights in our democracy. She conceived of and moderated the first plenary panel of Latino/a Secretaries of State, which resulted in documenting best practices to protect voting rights as well as ways in which HNBA lawyers can make a career in election law. She is currently working on a documentary about voting rights in the 2016 election cycle.

A former Fulbright Scholar, Culliton-González taught human rights law in Chile (1993-1994), and among other awards, she graduated as Valedictorian of the Washington College of Law of American University in 1993. She is the author of a series of law review articles and other publications, written in English and Spanish, which have been used to protect civil and human rights in the Americas (see: [works.bepress.com/katherine\\_culliton](http://works.bepress.com/katherine_culliton)). Her most recent law review article, published in Harvard Human Rights Law Journal, analyzes birthright citizenship as well as the intersection between disparate access to citizenship and Latino voting rights. Culliton-González is a former MALDEF lawyer, and frequently appeared in Spanish-language media as a nationally-recognized immigrants' rights expert. She served as Director of Voter Protection for Advancement Project, a national racial justice organization, from 2012-2016, where she led cutting-edge litigation and policy advocacy to protect against discrimination in voting, and frequently appeared in national media. From 2008-2012, she served as Senior Attorney in the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, where she brought a series of cases to enforce the anti-discrimination provisions of the Voting Rights Act on behalf of Latinos, African Americans, and other voters of color across the nation. Her cases and enforcement actions have protected the rights of many thousands of Latino voters in Florida, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas, and other states.

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## Julie Fernandes



Julie Fernandes is the advocacy director for voting rights and democracy at the Open Society Foundations where she works to influence public policy in support of the protection of civil and human rights in the United States.

Prior to her current position, Fernandes was deputy assistant attorney general for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Justice, where she was responsible for oversight of the division's voting rights program.

For more than six years, Fernandes was the senior counsel at the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. Fernandes also served as special assistant to President Bill Clinton at the White House Domestic Policy Council; was counsel to the assistant attorney general for civil rights, Bill Lann Lee; and spent time as a trial lawyer in the Housing and Voting Sections of the Civil Rights Division. Fernandes has testified before Congress on voting rights issues and has authored several research reports and magazine pieces primarily in the areas of voting rights and criminal justice reform.

Fernandes received both her JD and AB degrees from the University of Chicago and clerked for the Honorable Diane P. Wood at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

# Chris Melody Fields-Figueredo



Chris Melody joined the Lawyers' Committee in December 2011, serving as the Election Protection campaign manager to ensure the successful execution of the 2012 program. She continues to work with the Voting Rights Project to combat efforts to curb access to the ballot box, expand voting rights and create tools to educate and empower voters. As the Lawyers' Committee's lead organizer, she works with the organizing and tech team to develop strategies to address critical civil rights issues.

Prior to joining the Lawyers' Committee, she worked in the government affairs division for a biological resource center on their global health and biosecurity agenda. Before that, Ms. Fields Figueredo spent two years as the Outreach Director for Common Cause working to advance their democracy reform agenda and pass federal legislation that would create publicly financed campaigns for members of Congress. She got her start in community organizing and issue advocacy as a Program Specialist for DC ParentSmart, a nonprofit working to help DC parents navigate the education system. A seasoned campaign organizer, she has served in numerous roles for different political campaigns across the country including as the Iowa Deputy Political Director for a 2008 presidential campaign, campaign manager for an Iowa State Senate race in 2006, and a field organizer for a 2004 U.S. Senate campaign in South Carolina.

Born in Venezuela and raised in Texas, she graduated from Austin College with a B.A. in English Literature and Anthropology. Follow Chris Melody on Twitter [@Fieldsy](#).

# Professor Sonia Antolec



Professor Antolec is Chair of the Government and Public Interest Law Section of the HNBA, an adjunct law professor, and a recognized and sought-after Latino voting rights expert in her home city of Chicago. She holds a J.D. from Loyola School of Law, and has taught various law classes with a focus on criminal and juvenile justice at Loyola and DePaul law schools.  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sonia-antolec-24363950>.

She is leading the HNBA's local voter registration effort in Chicago on September 10.



Maria Urbina - INVITED

*VP of Politics & National Campaigns*

Maria Urbina is the VP of Politics & National Campaigns at Voto Latino where she is charged with developing a voter engagement strategy, running multiple national campaigns, and heading up the political arm of Voto Latino.

Before joining Voto Latino, Maria served as the Senior Advisor for Hispanic and Asian Affairs in the office of Democratic Leader Harry Reid (D-NV). In this role, Maria advised Senator Reid on policy, political strategy and outreach affecting Latino and Asian American communities in Nevada and across the country. Maria also worked with influential Latino and Asian American groups to elevate their advocacy within the Democratic Caucus of the U.S. Senate. Prior to joining Senator Reid's senior staff, Maria served as his legislative correspondence manager and immigration legislative correspondent and aide. In addition to her Senate work, Maria has worked on Latino political outreach in several key campaigns, including for Senator Reid in 2010, President Obama in 2012 and Senator Mark Udall in 2014.

Maria was raised in Carson City, Nevada and is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, where she majored in political science and journalism.

Maria is a proud alumnus of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Public Policy Fellowship program and was selected by American University's Women & Politics Institute to participate in the WeLEAD Leadership Training Program for young women in politics.

**Degrees:** BA, University of Nevada, Reno

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## Tab 2 – Course Materials (articles, publications, other materials)

**Materials:**

- (1) NALEO, [Latino Voters At Risk: Assessing the Impact of Restrictive Voting Laws in Election 2016](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/naleo/pages/233/attachments/original/1462976324/Latino_Voters_at_Risk_7.pdf) (May 2016), available at:  
[https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/naleo/pages/233/attachments/original/1462976324/Latino\\_Voters\\_at\\_Risk\\_7.pdf](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/naleo/pages/233/attachments/original/1462976324/Latino_Voters_at_Risk_7.pdf).

- (2) NAACP LDF, Democracy Diminished: State and Local Threats to Voting Rights Post-Shelby County v. Holder (June 2016), available at:  
[http://www.naacpldf.org/files/publications/Democracy%20Diminished-State%20and%20Local%20Voting%20Changes%20Post-Shelby%20v.%20Holder\\_4.pdf](http://www.naacpldf.org/files/publications/Democracy%20Diminished-State%20and%20Local%20Voting%20Changes%20Post-Shelby%20v.%20Holder_4.pdf).
- (3) Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (by leading voting rights groups), Warning Signs: The Potential Impact of Shelby County v. Holder on the 2016 General Election (June 2016), available at: <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/reports/2016-Voting-Rights-Report-FOR-WEB.pdf>.