CollegeBoard Advocacy
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Young Lives on Hold: The College Dreams of Undocumented Students

Participant Biographies

Hon. Robert Menendez

United States Senator (NJ)

Bob Menendez grew up as the son of immigrants in a tenement building in Union City, N.J. A product of New Jersey's public schools and a graduate of the state's universities, he has served as a school board member, a mayor and a state legislator. Since 1992, he has been fighting for New Jersey families in Washington, where he rose to become the third-highest-ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives before taking office in the Senate in 2006.

Menendez first entered public service as a 19-year-old college student, when he launched a successful petition drive to reform his local school board. That experience taught him about the importance of standing up for what is right, no matter how powerful the opposition.

That same commitment led Menendez to stand up to the powerful mayor of Union City, N.J., when he saw him abusing his office for personal gain. He took on the mayor and testified against him in court, even though it meant wearing a bulletproof vest after receiving threats to his life. Menendez stood up to the entire political establishment in his hometown, and led a coalition of reformers that cleaned up the city.

In Congress, he has fought to make health care more affordable for New Jersey's families and to improve schools so that they prepare our children for a successful future. Now he is fighting to make college more affordable for the next generation of leaders.

Menendez believes we should honor our parents by making sure they can retire with dignity, and he has introduced legislation to make it easier for families to care for their aging loved ones. And he has led the fight to stop the privatization of Social Security.

After Sept. 11, 2001, Menendez earned national recognition for his leadership in reforming the country's intelligence and public health systems, and for fighting to establish an independent commission to investigate the terrorist attacks on our country. Today, he is working to improve the security of our bus, rail and public transit systems.

Elected by his colleagues in 2002 as the chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, Menendez became the highest-ranking Hispanic in Congressional history. He previously served as the vice chairman of the Democratic Caucus and has led key task forces on education and homeland security.

After being appointed by New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine, Menendez was sworn in to the Senate on Jan. 18, 2006. In November of that year, New Jerseyans elected him to serve a full six-year term as a U.S. senator. He currently serves on the Senate Banking, Finance, Housing and Urban Affairs, Energy and Natural Resources, Budget, and Foreign Relations committees. He is also the chairman of the Subcommittee on International Development and Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs, and International Environmental Protection.

Menendez was born in New York City on Jan. 1, 1954. He received his B.A. from St. Peter's College in Jersey City and his law degree from Rutgers University. He currently lives in Hoboken and has two children, Alicia and Robert.

Joseph Zogby

Chief Counsel to Senator Richard Durbin (IL), Assistant Majority Leader, U.S. Senate

Joseph Zogby is the Staff Director of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs and Chief Counsel to Senator Dick Durbin, the U.S. Senate's Assistant Majority Leader. Previously, Zogby was Staff Director of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law. He has also been Special Counsel on Post-9/11 Discrimination in the U.S. Department of Justice and Senior Trial Attorney in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. Prior to that, Zogby was a Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. He is a recipient of the Department of Justice's Special Achievement Award, the International Peace Prayer Day's Man of Peace Award, the Echoing Green Public Service Fellowship, and Georgetown University Law Center's Deborah Hauger International Public Interest Law Fellowship. Zogby received a J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law, where he was awarded the Robert F. Kennedy Public Service Award, and a B.A. from the University of Virginia.

James M. Montoya

Vice President, The College Board

James Montoya is vice president of higher education relationship development at the College Board. In this position, he directs the College Board's efforts to support the work of colleges and universities across the country, especially in the areas of admissions, recruitment and retention. Based in New York, he also oversees the international division. Previously, he was vice president for the western regions of the College Board, where he oversaw the management and operation of three regional offices.

Montoya joined the College Board in 2001 after a decade of service with his alma mater, Stanford University, where he was first dean of admission and financial aid, then vice provost for student affairs, the university's chief student affairs officer. He continues to serve as a lecturer in the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University.

He began his work in student affairs at Occidental College in Los Angeles, where he became the youngest director of admission at a leading liberal arts school. After leaving Occidental he joined Vassar College in New York, where he spent several years, including two as dean of student life with oversight of the admission office.

Though best known for his work in the college admissions process, Montoya is personally very interested in public policy as it relates to education. In that context, author Gus Frias profiled him in the book "American Achievers." Montoya has also appeared on Ted Koppel's "Nightline" to defend the practices of need-blind admissions and need-blind financial aid.

A native of San José, Calif., Montoya earned a bachelor's degree with academic distinction from Stanford in 1975 and a master's degree in administration and policy analysis from Stanford's School of Education. As an undergraduate, he received the Dinkelspiel Award, the highest honor bestowed on a graduating senior, recognizing scholarly achievements and outstanding contributions to undergraduate education at Stanford. Montoya also was named a Hispanic Hero of the Bay Area for his contributions to the Latino community.

In addition to his current College Board responsibilities, Montoya serves on the advisory board of the Stanford University School of Education, on the board of trustees for the Oakwood School in Southern California, on the board of advisers of the University of Iowa's Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, and on the board of advisers of CommonSense Media, a nonprofit organization that provides parents with information to help manage their children's media lives. He previously served as a Trustee of the College Board in New York and chaired the Guidance and Admission National Assembly. Additionally, Montoya has served on the boards of the Stanford Alumni Association; the National Hispanic Institute; the Abraham Lincoln High School Foundation in San José; TheatreWorks, one of California's premier professional theater groups; and Hidden Villa, a 1,600-acre farm and wilderness preserve in Los Altos Hills, Calif.

Roberto G. Gonzales

Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Washington

Roberto G. Gonzales is an assistant professor at the University of Washington School of Social Work. He earned his Ph.D. in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Irvine; his M.S.W. from the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago; and his undergraduate degree from Colorado College. He combines 17 years of direct service with immigrant youth and families and formal training in sociology and social welfare to shape his research and teaching interests. His current research explores the effects of legal status on 1.5 Generation unauthorized young adults. Drawing from 250 respondents and 102 in-depth life histories, he examines the role of policy, processes of acculturation, and mediating institutions in shaping the pathways and options available to unauthorized youth as they move into adulthood. Gonzales' research and teaching interests include international and unauthorized migration, urban studies, the 1.5 and 2nd Generations, and Latino communities and families. He is the author of "Left Out but Not Shut Down: Political Activism and the Undocumented Student Movement," "Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams: The Lost Potential of Undocumented Students" and the forthcoming "Young Lives on Hold: The College Dreams of Undocumented Students," with the College Board. He is a co-founder of Video Machete, a youth media organization in Chicago, and has served on several local and national boards, including those of the Crossroads Fund and the American Friends Service Committee.

Hemi Kim

D.C. Director, National Korean American Service & Education Consortium

Hemi Kim, D.C. director for NAKASEC, serves as that organization's District of Columbia representative. In that capacity, she keeps abreast of current political issues and proposals, and communicates NAKASEC's position to constituents and legislators in order to obtain their support. Her responsibilities also include identifying and developing opportunities to deepen collaborative work with national and District of Columbia-based organizations. She has worked in immigrant and health policy advocacy and analysis as a policy analyst at the Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum, and as a health policy advocate at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California. She has also fostered Korean American community engagement as administrator of the Korean American Coalition in Washington, D.C.

Gumecindo Salas

Vice President, Government Relations, Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities

Gumecindo Salas, Ph.D., serves as the vice president of governmental relations for the Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities. Prior to his joining HACU, Salas was a professor of urban studies and integrative studies of social science at Michigan State University, where he also served as director of minority programs for staff and faculty development. He formerly taught at Detroit Public Schools and at Wayne State University, where he helped establish a Chicano-Boricua studies program and also served as its director for three years. He earned and master's degrees from Wayne State University, and a Ph.D. in sociology and higher education from the University of Michigan. His research expertise is in the area of multicultural diversity in education and the workplace. Other research areas involve charter schools and their impact on minority populations, and the voting patterns of Hispanics in the United States. Salas served as an elected member of the Michigan State Board of Education for two eight-year terms, as a member of the Saginaw Valley State University Board of Trustees, and on the Governor's Commission for the Improvement of Higher Education in Michigan.