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Democrat Gina Hinojosa tells Latino gathering their votes can topple Texas Republicans in November

Candidate for governor used her speech at LULAC to drive home the message that the civil rights of Latinos were being oppressed by Gov. Greg Abbott's policies.

By [Karen Brooks Harper](#), [Alyda Muela](#), *Austin Bureau, Staff Writer*

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 Gift Article





Democratic gubernatorial candidate Gina Hinojosa speaks during the League of United Latin American Citizens National Convention at the Fort Worth Convention Center in Fort Worth, TX Thursday, June 18, 2026.

Juan Figueroa/The Dallas Morning News



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Democrat Gina Hinojosa tells Latino gathering their votes can topple Texas Republicans

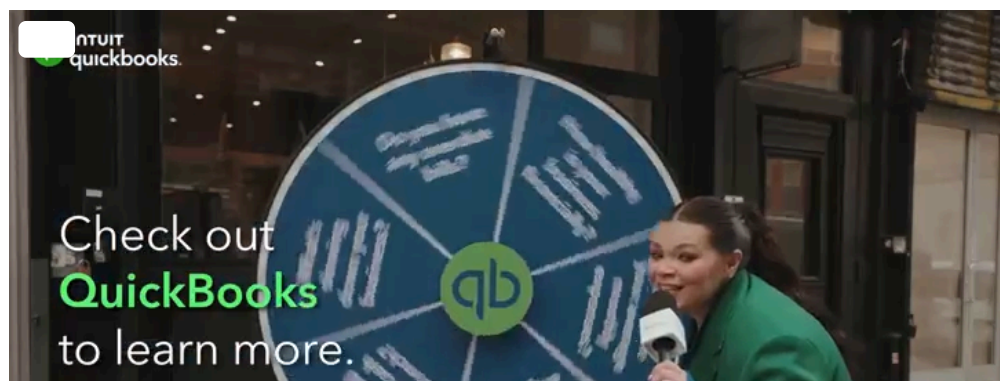
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Democrat Gina Hinojosa's [campaign to unseat Gov. Greg Abbott](#) swung through a gathering of the nation's largest and oldest group of politically active Latinos on Thursday, firing up a Fort Worth crowd with a message of empowerment against corrupt government leaders.



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“There is one fight in America, in Texas, right now,” Hinojosa said. “Are we going to be a Texas that is by and for the people? Or is this the billionaires’ world and we just live in it? We have an opportunity to make that decision come November. The Latino vote can be the difference if we choose to be.”



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She called Abbott “the *mordida* governor,” and “the most corrupt governor in Texas history” due to his close relationship with people and companies making money off private school vouchers and immigration detention centers. *Mordida* is slang for “kickback” in Spanish.

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Abbott's campaign has disputed allegations that campaign contributors receive special treatment and has highlighted Texas' economic performance, job growth and conservative policy agenda during his tenure.

Hinojosa's remarks opened a gathering of more than 10,000 Latino delegates, civic leaders, politicians and visitors from 44 states who were in Texas this week for the League of United Latin American Citizens 97th annual national convention. She also spoke to youth delegates at a private event on Wednesday evening.

"We have to be so disciplined this year," she said in her speech before 500 attendees. "If we put in the work, if we decide to be the difference that we need to be for ourselves and for our families and for our state, we will win."

The annual convention, held this year at the Fort Worth Convention Center, focuses on mobilizing and energizing LULAC, an organization claiming 350,000 members and hundreds of state and local councils across the United States.



Audience members clap as Bobby Pulido, a Tejano singer and Democrat running in Texas' 15th Congressional District, speaks during the League of United Latin American Citizens National Convention at the Fort Worth Convention Center in Fort Worth, TX Thursday, June 18, 2026.

Juan Figueroa/The Dallas Morning News

The conference also featured state Rep. James Talarico, the Democrat facing Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton for the Senate; Dallas state Sen. Nathan Johnson, the Democratic nominee for attorney general; and Tejano music star Bobby Pulido, a Democratic congressional candidate, along with several state representatives.

Hinojosa, an Austin state representative and former school board president, is seeking to topple Abbott, a well-funded Republican attempting to hold his seat for a historic fourth term. The two face each other in November.

Winning back Latinos

LULAC has been battling Abbott for years over his push for Congressional redistricting, which last year saw Texas Republicans redraw district lines to potentially knock out five Democratic members of Congress. The group is among several arguing that the map violates voters' rights by weakening their power in the redrawn districts, including Latino voters.

Often described as the state's largest bloc of swing voters, Latinos moved toward Republicans in the 2024 elections – supporting President Donald Trump's reelection and flipping historically blue South Texas seats in both state and local elections.

In the meantime, however, Republicans have drawn increasing anger from those same voters – many of whom are heavily critical of anti-immigrant actions by federal agencies as well as Abbott, who has tossed billions in public funding toward border operations in recent years.

Manuel Padilla Olea, a construction worker from Salinas, Calif., attended out of concern for current U.S. immigration policies, hoping the Latino population can unite to oppose them.

"We're not a minority, we're a majority, and there's a lot of people that need support," he said.

Related: [Chorizo, menudo blend with politics as March primary candidates court Latino voters](https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/article/gina-hinojosa-tells-latinos-votes-topple-texas-gop-22308153.php)

The trend of Latino voters leaning Republican alarmed Texas Democrats – and while recent polls show them potentially regaining the Latino voters' trust, their critical role in this cycle's push to take Texas back to blue after three decades under Republicans was an obvious undercurrent at the convention on Thursday.

"When we do the work, Latinos turn out to vote in record numbers, and they align on the vote on Latino priorities," said attendee Hector Sanchez Barba, president and CEO of Mi Familia Vota, which has one of the largest Latino voter registration, education, and mobilization infrastructures in the country. "So, for us, Texas is very important. If Texas changes politically, our whole democracy changes."

Hinojosa earlier this month [kicked off her Team Texas Public School Program initiative](#), which trains parents, teachers and administrators to be "local coaches" in the fight against school closures. Her campaign has trained its sights on Abbott's support of private school vouchers, which she says drain critical resources from the free public education so many Texans, including Latinos, depend on.

Over the past few weeks, Hinojosa has made several campaign stops in North Texas, including two in Fort Worth. She's also been part of events in Plano and Dallas.



Texas state Rep., and Democratic candidate for governor, Gina Hinojosa addresses a campaign rally in Plano, Monday, June 1, 2026.
Smiley N. Pool/The Dallas Morning News

At each stop, she criticized Abbott for the rising cost of living Texans face and said his actions are contributing to schools “shutting down all over the state.”

“We win by running on people's concerns,” she said at a June 1 event in Plano. “People are concerned about being able to afford the American dream, their own home, having kids, paying their bills.”

Abbott has not mentioned Hinojosa's name on the campaign trail, including a speech last week at the Texas Republican Party Convention. He instead attacked Democratic Senate nominee James Talarico and the Democratic Party.

Hinojosa said Abbott does not say her name because he doesn't want to elevate her.

"He fears me," she said.

Concerns over education, border policies

In Fort Worth on Thursday, Jessica Saidam, 53, a delegate from San Antonio, said education was her top concern.

Saidam, who leads youth initiatives as deputy director of young adults for LULAC's San Antonio district, traveled with a group of students. She said she is confident that Hinojosa can mobilize the Latino vote.

"She's bringing a lot to the table. We all have hope, and we're all supporting her because she believes in us," Saidam said.

In her speech during the convention's opening session, Hinojosa invited the audience to join the public schools fight. But she spent most of her 11 minutes on stage driving home the message that the civil rights of Latinos were being oppressed by Abbott's border policies, as well as his focus on cultural issues over the economic problems faced by Texans.

It was a point that resonated with some attendees. Gracie Cortez, deputy director of youth in LULAC's Grand Prairie chapter, hopes Hinojosa can turn the tide in November. She has noticed how tougher immigration enforcement affects her students.

"When one of their parents gets taken into detention, it's really difficult for them to continue their studies," Cortez said.

Hinojosa reminded the audience of privately owned immigration detention centers in Texas that use taxpayer dollars to run and staff. She spoke of criminal sexual abuse cases in which witnesses were afraid to come forward for fear of being deported.

"What is happening right now, the attacks on our families, on our communities, on our small businesses, is not making us more safe – it is making us less safe," she said. "It can feel like the leaders of this country and in Texas don't like us. That they are anti-Latino. The truth is, it's not that they hate us. It's that they are using us. They are using us to make more money for themselves and their billionaire friends."

Political writer Gromer Jeffers Jr. contributed to this report.

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AUSTIN BUREAU



Karen Brooks Harper is a senior writer covering Texas politics from the DMN's long-standing Austin Bureau. A Mizzou Tiger with nearly 30 years in Texas journalism, she has also covered the cartel wars along the border, Congress in Mexico City, 3 presidential races, and 6 hurricanes. Raised on blues in the MS Delta, she lives in ATX with her son, her boxing gloves, and her guitar. In that order.



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERN



Originally from El Paso, Alyda recently graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso with a BA in multimedia journalism and a minor in general business. After working at her university's student publication, she interned for the local public radio station KTEP and Puente News Collaborative, a nonprofit news organization covering the U.S.–Mexico border.

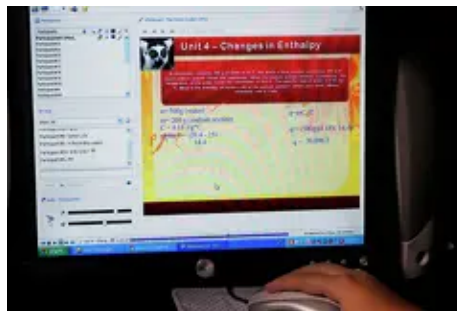
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