



Orange County winner Sanchez

THE ELECTION

How the GOP Lost the Hispanic Vote

WHO EVER SAID FEAR isn't the ultimate motivator? For years, Hispanic leaders have tried to coax and cajole their growing masses to build real power through the vote. But nothing much happened until this year, when the Republican-led Congress passed strict laws that cut benefits for legal immigrants and threatened others with deportation. Nearly a million Latino immigrants joined the surge of new citizens—and many of them registered to vote. On Nov. 5, the total number of Latino votes jumped by more than 23 percent over 1992, from 4.24 million to 5.25 million.

Fear also pushed Latinos more deeply into the arms of the Democrats. Seventy-two percent voted for Bill Clinton this year, 12 percent higher than in 1992. The state's Hispanic community split its vote, helping Clinton to an upset win in Florida. But nowhere was the payoff so big as in California, where the Democrats regained control of the state legislature—and elected a Latino assembly speaker. In Orange County, a bastion of conservatism, Republican stalwart Robert Dornan got nudged out by 984 votes. How did he lose? His opponent, Loretta Brixey, dropped her married name and ran as Loretta Sanchez.

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