



## **SOUTHWEST VOTER REGISTRATION EDUCATION PROJECT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Texas Celebrates Willie Velásquez Day on May 9, 2018**

**SVREP Calls Texas Leaders and School Districts to Celebrate with a Day of Service!**

**(San Antonio, TX – May 9, 2018)** Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP) will celebrate the 2018 Willie Velásquez Day today Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, at its annual benefit dinner. SVREP calls on Texas leaders and school districts to celebrate Willie Velásquez Day with a “Day of Service.”

The Willie Velásquez Day is an official Texas Recognition Day designated by the Texas Legislature in 2013 to honor the legacy of SVREP founder William C. Velásquez. SVREP encourages Day of Service activities at the local and state level.

“The Willie Velásquez Day is a day that school districts can take part in a day in which students can create their own community service activities. They can plant trees, clean their neighborhoods, or partner with SVREP to register all eligible voters to vote” says SVREP Vice President Lydia Camarillo. “We cannot think of better way of honoring the voting rights pioneer than by institutionalizing a day of service in Willie’s name and continuing his legacy by getting all eligible high school students registered to vote”, concludes Camarillo.

“2018 marks 30 years since the untimely passing of William C. Velásquez, founder of Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP) and William C. Velásquez Institute (WCVI). Born in the west side of San Antonio, Texas, Willie’s involvement with Latino organizations was extensive. He was a visionary who dedicated his life to changing the lives of every day Latinos”, said Antonio González, SVREP and WCVI President.

Gonzalez adds, “Willie Velásquez founded SVREP in 1974 to give people a voice, and an opportunity to fulfill their aspirations. Velásquez began his work with very limited resources. Armed with little more than a rotary telephone, folding table and chair, and a phone book, Willie proceeded to register Mexican-American, Tejanos to vote and filed voting rights lawsuits to change systemic barriers that diluted the Latino vote. He worked tirelessly to give Latinos a voice in America’s democracy.

In 1995, William C. Velásquez was posthumously awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton. The following year, his name was attached to the US Senate version of the Voting Rights Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 1996.

Texas Election Code 13.031.3 calls for High School Districts to conduct voter registration drives to register to vote eligible students. The Willie Velásquez Day is a perfect opportunity for high schools to register voters from April 9<sup>th</sup> to May 9<sup>th</sup> to commemorate Willie Velásquez and comply with the law. SVREP partners with high schools across the state to register their eligible student body. For more information on the Willie Velásquez visit the SVREP website at <http://svrep.org/willie-velasquez-day-2018.php>.

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***SVREP is the largest and oldest non-partisan Latino voter participation organization in the United States, founded by William C. Velásquez in 1974 Its mission is to empower Latinos. Since it opened its doors, SVREP has registered more than 2.6 million Latino voters, trained 150,000 Latino leaders and won 97 voting rights actions.***