



# JoCasta Zamarripa

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE

### **The Disheartening Hypocrisy of Rep. Rodriguez**

*Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa*

*May 2, 2016*

Last week Monday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, Governor Scott Walker signed anti-immigrant, anti-local government SB 533 into law. This bill sets unnecessary hurdles for Milwaukee, and local governments across the state, in seeking to issue photo identification to their residents who have trouble getting state issued IDs such as undocumented immigrants.

As the representative of a district that has been home to immigrant families for generations, it is my responsibility to be at the forefront of immigrant rights and immigration policy. I grew up next to Polish neighbors, in the shadow of St. Josaphat's Basilica, which was built by the hands of European immigrants on Milwaukee's near south side. Today, the district's immigrants families are diverse, but majority Latino. I am proud to say I was born and raised in the community that I now represent in our state's legislature.

And despite my dismay at Governor Walker's decision to sign SB 533 into law, by far the biggest disappointment was State Representative Jessie Rodriguez' (R- Franklin) decision to be one of the co-authors of this anti-immigrant legislation. Rodriguez also voted in favor of this bill, as well as another anti-immigrant bill, AB 450 (the so-called "Sanctuary City" bill), which died in the state senate this year.

Rodriguez is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hispanic elected to the Wisconsin State Legislature. I still remember the night she won in a special election in 2013. She is a Republican and I am a Democrat, but I was still proud to see another Latina get elected to the legislature. Many non-elected conservative Latinos stand with me when it comes to immigrant rights and policy, so I had high hopes that Rodriguez would work with me on these issues as best she could.

We met personally on several occasions to discuss my pro-immigrant policy efforts. She heard me out, but declined to sign on to my legislation. I was disappointed, but the truth is I understood where she was coming from, both because of the make-up of her district and the make-up of her political party.

I never publicly raised this issue until this year, when Republicans in the state legislature began to move two anti-immigrant bills through the legislature. I was aghast to see Rep. Rodriguez listed as a co-author of SB 533. And after speaking with a couple of close confidants, I made the difficult decision to bring Rodriguez' narrative to the public's attention.

Rep. Rodriguez came to this country as an undocumented immigrant. She was able to get on a pathway to citizenship and she went on to achieve the American Dream, if you will. Oftentimes, we will be at an event together and she is introduced as the "first Latina immigrant" elected to the legislature.



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The hypocrisy of not only Rodriguez, but also of the Republican Party and conservative organizations like the LIBRE Initiative, which recently hired staff in Milwaukee to advance their conservative ideology and support of Republican candidates, to pay lip service to the needs of immigrants and Latinos is appalling.

The decision to co-author a bill that holds back the very community which Rodriguez hails from exemplifies the insincerity and dishonesty of the Republican Party and the LIBRE Initiative in their attempt to win over Latino voters. Rodriguez' decision to help advance anti-immigrant legislation in Wisconsin also localizes the national GOP effort we have seen in propping up Latino candidates like Ted Cruz who is adamantly anti-immigrant despite being Latino and having been born in another country.

As a state legislator, I will continue to advocate for my district, for immigrants, for my fellow Latinos, and for all Wisconsinites. Our community's diversity is a source of our strength. We must unite together against the anti-immigrant and anti-Latino agenda being advanced here in Wisconsin and on the national stage. I ask you to join me in speaking up against the Republicans' mean-spirited and divisive agenda. My community raised me to be better than that.