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Candidate Statement

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Name: Jennifer Martinez

SECRETARY OF STATE  
STATE OF IDAHO

Office Title: U.S. Representative-2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District

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**1. Biography:**

I am a first-generation Idahoan, a proud daughter of immigrant parents, and fiancé to a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran. I grew up in Wendell, the Hub City of the Magic Valley, where my family settled upon arriving to Idaho to work in the agriculture and dairy industry in pursuit of the American Dream in order to provide my sister and me a life full of opportunities. It was here that I saw first-hand the value of the agricultural and dairy industries to the Magic Valley and to Idaho as they provided jobs for so many hard-working and dedicated New Americans, such as my parents, grandfather, uncles, aunts, and friends.

After graduating from Gonzaga University in 2009, I worked for U.S. Senator Patty Murray where I handled constituent work for Eastern Washington as well as maintained and developed relationships within the 4 NE counties of Washington State. It was during this work, while I was assisting veterans navigate the VA system to get access to healthcare or get updates on their claims, or assisting homeowners who were desperately trying to hang on to their homes after the economic downfall, that I understood the intricacies that go on behind the scenes and how frustrating this can be for the public. After 2.5 years of public service in the Senator's office, I made the decision to move back home.

I moved back to Idaho to be closer to my family. I moved back because I realized that people from my generation cannot continue to leave the state—we must do what we can to create change and opportunity here in Idaho. In my almost 29 years of life, I have worked for Idahoans by serving in the legislature for the House Minority Caucus, by working to repeal the Harmful Luna Laws in 2012, by working for low-income Idahoans impacted by predatory payday lenders, for those who have fallen in the Medicaid Gap, for immigrant families who have been impacted by a lack of comprehensive immigration reform, and for DREAMers who are also working to achieve the American Dream.

**2. My Top Priorities**

As a woman, I know first-hand the inequity we face in all aspects of life—equal pay, respect, bodily autonomy. As a Latina in Idaho, I see the underrepresentation of diverse communities in our state; with a growing population of Latinos in the 2nd Congressional District, and being a refugee resettlement site, we need someone who will listen seriously to our concerns and act on them.

As a graduate of America's university system, and as a millennial, I feel the daunting burden of student debt. Wanting to continue with post-secondary education should not mean that we accept living with an insurmountable debt for the rest of our lives. Everyone should have the opportunity to further their education if they choose, without debt being a barrier. In addition, no one should have to leave their home state in order to get a job with a livable wage—we need to bring these types of jobs into our state and ensure our workforce is able to step into these positions.

As the daughter of immigrant parents, I know how fortunate my parents were in receiving permanent residency (which provided a path to citizenship) through the Amnesty offered by President Ronald Reagan in 1986. But there are so many others who are contributing significantly to our local communities, to our economy, and it is not fair that they should continue to live their lives in fear and in the shadows. It is time to reform our broken immigration system which affects not only the growing immigrant population in our state but also the dairy and agricultural industries that depend heavily on the irreplaceable labor people like my father, uncles, and friends have provided.

I am running to represent Idaho in the U.S. House of Representatives because Idaho needs someone who is willing to go to bat for all of our needs, regardless of the political repercussions. Washington D.C. is broken, and what we need are people who are willing to work together to fix these issues instead of pointing fingers. It is time that all of us come together to figure out solutions to these ever-increasing problems. I am running to represent everyone in my peers, my family, and my fellow Idahoans. It's high time that all of our voices are heard.