

MARCH
2008

Commission on Hispanic Affairs

VOLUME I ISSUE XI



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Parental Involvement
- Citizenship Day Assistance
- The New Americans Policy Council
- Save the Date Events

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Message from the Director

Unbelievably, in the blink of an eye, 1st quarter 2008 has eluded us. None the less much has transpired and much was accomplished.

Accolades to all who participated in our 2008 Latino Legislative Day. Once again we had a grand presence! A special recognition to the folks from the Tri-Cities for their outstanding efforts fundraising, getting their communities involved, and for a great tamale feast. In addition, a special thank you to the talented youth of the Wenatchee High School Mariachi group for entertaining us and concluding yet another commemorative event. All discussion forums were well attended, the weather was splendid, and much was achieved.

Legislative Session 2008, though short kept the Commission engaged tracking 112 bills related to Education, Health Care, Housing, Justice & Equity, and Business Development. It was invigorating

and refreshing watching our young interns researching and writing testimonies, attending hearings, and testifying in support of bills. Although unfamiliar with the legislative process, they persevered with determination, enthusiasm, and teamwork. Thank you Don Barker, Susan Jones, and Nicole Peger for your outstanding contributions!

Exclusively in the area of Education, we tracked 45 bills.

- Twelve bills focused on high school graduation requirements which included the WASL
- Nine were associated with higher education
- Eight were linked to issues on basic educational programs, funding and regulations
- Three dealt with either Preschool or adult educational opportunities and
- Six bills were related to the issue of ELL students and language instructors

Education Bills of significance: SHB 2810 will provide enhanced resources for

school districts with a high number of ELL students and EHB 2607 will develop recommendations for increasing teacher knowledge and skills when addressing the needs of an ELL student.

In the area of Health Care:

- Six bills related to services for children and young adults
- Seven were focused on regulation changes in the Health Care system and
- Two addressed insurance for small employers

Great strides were taken in the public safety arena with new community protections against sex offenders, drunk drivers, and street gangs. Of great disillusionment were the changes made to E2SHB 2712, Criminal Street Gangs. This bill was originally written to include funds for the development of programs that focused on prevention, thus enabling communities to address gang related problems. Regrettably this language was taken out of the bill; leaving us with great concern for our community, as well as all communities



Message from the Director *continued*

in Washington State. It is imperative that we remain proactive in addressing this issue and willing to take the necessary measures to reduce this type of activity amid our youth.

Overall, the Legislature sent a number of significant bills to the Governor this year including: SB5261, granting the Insurance Commissioner veto authority over health benefit rate increases; SB 6580, incorporating climate change into the Growth Management Act; and, SB 6809, providing a state tax credit for low income families.

On the budget front, perhaps the most important figure was the amount that the House and Senate leaders left in reserves: \$850.2 million. The budget for the biennium grew by over \$300 million; most of the extra money went to education expenses, such as increases for teacher salaries and expanded all-day kindergarten programs.

We are grateful to the Legislature for the policy that came out of this session and are optimistic that next session will be one of further groundbreaking probabilities. Unquestionably, much work is still needed in the

areas of Education, Health Care and Economic Development largely in the communities of color.

The Commissioners and Staff have been ardently working on our Strategic Plan; meticulously planning and revamping it to align with our Declaration, powers, and duties. We anticipate that this newly revised plan will strengthen the value of our policy and program recommendations and the provision of community services to the Latino communities of Washington State. A special thanks to Michael Gaffney, Christina Sanders, and José García-Pabón from WSU (Pullman and Richland campuses) for their collaboration and contribution.

Another favorable outcome is the recent appointment of Lillian Ortiz-Self as Commissioner for the Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, and San Juan Island counties. Lillian is a counselor with the Everett School District and is very much committed to being involved and engaged in her community particularly in the education arena.

I continue to be involved with the United States Hispanic Leadership

Institute (USHLI); with the ultimate goal of promoting empowerment and civic responsibility amongst Latinos everywhere.

We held workshops for students at the yearly LEAP Education Conference in February and celebrated their achievements and leadership pathways. In addition we continue to meet and partner with state agencies, chambers, etc. to further enhance outreach efforts to small Latino-owned businesses.

We said good-bye to a great colleague and passionate advocate of pesticide programs including illness monitoring and prevention for Latino farm workers and their families. Cheryl Hanks was relentless in her efforts to educate our Latino communities throughout Washington State on the dangers of pesticides and the monitoring of Cholinesterase. We will definitely miss her collaboration and participation at our public meetings; yet, wish her well in her retirement.

We invite you to join us at our Omak public meeting on April 25, 2008 at the Omak City Hall. The

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“We anticipate that this newly revised plan will strengthen the value of our policy and program recommendations and the provision of community services to the Latino communities of Washington State.”

Parental Involvement - Si, por supuesto!

By Victor Chacón

The Commission on Hispanic Affairs has been working hard lately to address the issue of education in our state. This is not an easy task because the education issue is so complex and difficult. As Chair of the Education Committee for the Commission, I am delighted at the energy and good will our commissioners have shown in focusing on the sticky issues around education, particularly the parental involvement issue.

What does parental involvement mean, anyway? And what does it mean in light of Latino families who are often unfamiliar with the state's educational system. How does parental involvement impact the success of our students?

For one thing, Latino parents need to learn about the educational requirements at the school district level, right in one's community. Specifically, parents need to focus on the schools' expectations of students, standardized testing requirements, an understanding of the curriculum, and more recently, the state's requirement for community service as a component for high school graduation. These are just a few of the many areas that Latino parents often have little or no understanding about.

For the majority of first generation Latinos of Mexican ancestry, it's important to realize that what may have worked in schools in Mexico

may no longer apply to schools here in Washington. Whereas, parents are not used to questioning the authority of teachers in Mexico (teachers are not challenged there), in the United States parents are free to challenge the authority of teachers. In fact, they are encouraged to do so because a parent's voice constitutes a vital and necessary part of a child's education. Here, the communication between the parent and the teacher matters. It stands to reason, then, that Latino parents need to find a voice for themselves and for their children. Latino parents should realize that education is a powerful American value. To be educated in the United States makes for a clear path to success in adulthood, and it positively impacts one's economic and social well-being.

This past February, L.E.A.P. (the Latino Education Achievement Project), headed by Ricardo Sanchez, held its annual conference in Tacoma, which I attended. The issue of parental involvement became a big topic of discussion there, especially since many of the students attending are still in high school. What I learned at the conference is that the great majority of Latino parents are uninvolved in the educational lives of their kids – not intentionally, mind you, but because parents sometimes feel they have little to contribute to their kids' education. The world is chang-

ing so fast and Latino parents quite often get left behind.

Another issue facing many Latino parents is the English language. Second language acquisition for monolingual school kids is critical – it impacts the way one communicates with teachers, counselors, and principals. But it is meaningful beyond belief for Latino parents who need to communicate with school district officials, with teachers, staff and administrators, and with school boards. A parent who has little or no command of English can communicate very little at best. Spanish interpreters aid a great deal in the translation process, but translators unfortunately may not always be available or competent.

A monolingual Spanish speaker myself until the age of ten, I can say it is no sin to be unable to speak English. My grandmother (who raised me) spoke no English. One thing she taught me is that language is personal, it is tied to identity. One's fluency in a language has a lot to do with one's well-being and one's confidence. In this sense, learning a second language is no different now than it was 100 years ago when countless first generation immigrants arrived to the U.S. from Europe in the early 1900's. It takes time to acquire another language – i.e. English. Furthermore, Spanish is truly a beautiful language. Many Latino parents regard Spanish as the mother tongue, the source of

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Parental Involvement continued

poetic beauty not just another useless tool to communicate with. Assuredly, Latino parents want their children to learn English, but not at the expense of losing the Spanish. The result is – bilingualism becomes the ideal; it captures the best of both worlds.

To this end, a parent’s voice can be a powerful engine in asserting the need for effective ELL (English Language Learner) programs in school districts across the state. Research has shown that bilingualism holds great promise in global economic trade, in cross-cultural discourse, and in efforts at peaceful coexistence. In the end, Latino parents “get it,” the idea of bilingualism; however, some school

district officials in the state challenge the efficacy of bilingual programs.

Parental effectiveness as it relates to education, then, requires considerable time and a lot of work, and it requires becoming informed about the most pressing issues affecting the education of one’s child. There is much to learn about parental rights, what kids are learning in math and science, testing, and graduation requirements. For Latinos, becoming competent in American culture is not a small part of the educational process of being a good parent; it is a huge part. Finding one’s voice as a parent is an important component of this. To be sure, learning English

helps a lot. It is not only admirable but also a necessity for students and parents to be fluent in Spanish and English if they are to succeed in the United States.

It takes courage to be an effective parent in today’s schools. This truth holds particular meaning for Latino parents whose sole concern is for their children and their children’s success. The Commission on Hispanic Affairs is here to advocate for and lend support toward better parental involvement in our schools in Washington. Feel free to give us a call. *¡Y buena suerte!*

Victor Chacón is the Walla Walla Commissioner and works at Walla Walla Community College.

Director’s Message

meeting will start at 6PM. The agenda will include a presentation on CHA’s priorities along with a panel discussion consisting of community leaders.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage everyone to get actively involved in your community; it is through involvement that we create greater visibility and recognition of our issues.

Revised CHA Public Meeting Schedule

Omak
Omak City Hall
April 25-26

Shelton
June 27-28

Everett
August 22-23

Citizenship Day

Presented by The Washington Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

Volunteer immigration attorneys, paralegals and interpreters will assist with citizenship applications

Date: Saturday, April 19, 2008

Time: 10AM to 4PM

Cost: \$20 per person

Centralia Community College
Learning Resource Center, Kirk Library Building
600 Centralia College Blvd. Centralia, WA 98531
(360) 736-9391 x404

Skagit Valley College, Lewis Hall
2405 College Way, Mt. Vernon, WA 98273
(360) 416-7095

Sea Mar Motel
627 West Lewis, Pasco, WA 99301
(509) 546-0865

Clallam-Jefferson County Pro Bono Lawyers
816 E. 8th St., Pt. Angeles, WA 98362
(360) 417-0818

Centro Latino
1208 S. 10th St., Tacoma, WA 98405
(253) 572-7717

Showalter Middle School
4628 S. 144th St., Tukwila, WA 98168
(206) 723-2203

Wenatchee Community Center
504 S. Chelan, Wenatchee, WA 98801
(509) 888-1561

Vida Nueva Church
1115 S. 5th Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902
(509) 469-7700

Please call the numbers listed under each site for further information on the documents that you need to bring to the workshops.

New Americans Policy Council

The Governor will soon be making appointments to this Council. Interested applicants may submit their applications to the Office of the Governor using the online application at <http://www.governor.wa.gov/boards/application/default.asp>

All letters of recommendation may be submitted to:

Office of the Governor
c/o Boards & Commissions
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

The Council shall make recommendations to the Governor on topics including but not limited to:

- a) Strategies to help legal permanent residents become naturalized;
- b) Acquisition of English language skills integral to the process of becoming citizens;
- c) Ways to recognize or transfer the skills, certification and professional credentials people earn in other countries into Washington's economy;
- d) Strategies that are needed to support the success for naturalization, English language acquisition and recognition or transference of certifications and professional credentials;
- e) Facilitating public-private partnerships for the integration of people seeking to become New Americans into the very fabric of our state, thus Creating a move vibrant, prosperous and vital Society.

The Governor shall appoint 12 to 15 members to the Council. Council members, who will serve at the Governor's pleasure, shall include representatives from state agencies, the Refugees' Advisory Council, business and labor, and community and nonprofit organizations. The Council will make initial recommendations to the Governor no later than December 1, 2008. The Council may make any additional interim reports as needed. The Council shall deliver a comprehensive final report including recommendations about the continuation of and tasks for the Council to the Governor no later than October 1, 2009.

Partnering for Success Conference



Partnering for Student Success

A Conference for Educators, Families & Community Groups
Yakima Convention Center — October 2-3, 2008

Learn how families, schools and communities working together increase learning and success for all students. National speakers will explain what current research says and how to put this into practice. Workshop presenters from around the state will share what they are doing to get results.

Save these Dates

*Partnering
for
Student Success*

October 2-3, 2008

Yakima
Convention
Center

&

*La Cima
Leadership Camp*

June 23-27, 2008

Chewelah Peak
Learning Center

New CISL Video



Successful Schools: Families Matter

The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning released a DVD featuring three promising family and community partnership programs from Washington State. It features what two schools and one district are doing to invite family and community and increase student success.

Successful Schools: Families Matter is available for download at www.yourlearningcenter.org. A copy of the DVD can be ordered by schools or school districts from cisl@k12.wa.us

Save the Date

Washington Student Leadership
Sponsored by the Association of Washington School Principals
Presents

La Cima Leadership Summer Camp Experience
Chewelah Peak Learning Center
www.awsp.org/lacimacamp

June 23-27, 2008

A Day In the Life of a Commissioner



CHA Commissioners are involved in substantive committee meetings, public meetings, study sessions, etc. They are expected to locally represent the Commission through involvement with the Latino community. In addition they are expected to form partnerships/relationships with local law enforcement, school district superintendent's, Legislators, as well as other local community leaders.

All Commission members serve as **volunteers** and are appointed by the Governor. For further information on the Commissioner that serves your area please go to our website; www.cha.wa.gov and click on the Commissioner tab.

Pictures: Activities include Commissioner's hard at work streamlining CHA's Strategic Plan, celebrating the Latino culture at the Latino Resource Fair in Vancouver, WA, attending public meetings, and collaborating with Legislators and local community leaders.



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MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs is to represent the Hispanic community in state government in order to empower Hispanics to exercise their right to equal opportunity in education, housing, health and economic development. The Commission strives to define issues pertaining to the rights and needs of Hispanics in order to provide recommendations to the Governor, the legislature, and state agencies. The recommendations can have a profound effect on state policies and lead to the improvement and the overall quality of life and future for the Hispanic community in the State of Washington.

www.cha.wa.gov



The Washington Latino Business Association, in collaboration with the local business community, is presenting a Leadership conference on May 22, 2008 at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal. Workshops targeting business owners or those who aspire to start a new business will be presented by SCORE, local business leaders, Washington State agencies that directly impact statewide businesses and the Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

Dr. Rodolfo Arevalo, President of Eastern Washington University will be the keynote speaker at the luncheon at noon in the dome area of the Cruise Terminal. Booths are available to the business community for \$125.00 and tables for eight for lunch will be sold for \$500.00. Single tickets for the lunch and workshops will be sold for \$40.00 and will be available at Jalapenos Restaurant and Gateway Center, 2nd floor.. Please call The Washington Latino Business Association at 360-685-4292 for information and reservations.

CHA Staff & Commissioners

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