



STATE OF INDIANA

**INDIANA COMMISSION ON
HISPANIC/LATINO AFFAIRS**
Mitchell E Daniels, Jr., Governor

ICHLA

**Indiana Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs
Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 24, 2012
3:00pm – 4:30pm
Conference Center Room 18
Indiana Government Center South
Indianapolis, IN**

Commissioners Present:

Richard Espinosa, Senate Lay Member, Fort Wayne (Vice-Chair)
Guadalupe 'Herb' Hernandez, Senate Lay member, Fort Wayne (Treasurer)
Freddie Thon, House Lay Member, South Bend
Virginia Hernandez, Designee, Civil Rights Commission
Joseph Cortes-Gurule, Designee, Dept of Education
Tina Little, Designee, Dept of Correction
Jesusa Rivera, House Lay Member, South Bend
Christian Gallo, Senate Lay Member, Lafayette (Chair)
Charlie Garcia, House Lay Member, Indianapolis
Pedro Ledo, Senate Lay Member, Ft. Wayne

Commissioners Not Present:

Alfredo Gonzalez, Governor Appointee, Indianapolis
Teresa Velez, Designee, Family and Social Services Administration
Rep. Mara Candelaria Reardon
Rep. Rebecca Kubacki
Senator Greg Walker
Senator Frank Mrvan

Visitors:

Staff Present:

Danny Lopez, Executive Director

Opening

Chairman Christian Gallo called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

He noted the lack of quorum, with ten members in attendance at the start of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

With no quorum, the minutes could not be approved.

Education Subcommittee report

Commissioner Jesusa Rivera indicated that the Education Subcommittee had held its first conference call meeting of the year with representatives from around the state. Discussed were the four points decided upon by commissioners as the focus for this committee; to determine statewide participation rates in early childhood education programs among Latinos, to determine obstacles to participation in these programs, to determine rates of adoption of technology among Latinos, and to determine barriers to greater adoption of technology.

The group prioritized the topics, deciding to focus most upon early childhood participation and technology adoption barriers. The next steps are to gather information and develop a survey to be distributed around Goshen, South Bend, and Indianapolis schools.

Executive Director Danny Lopez asked about the focus of the survey and whether it could be distributed statewide. He suggested that the commission reach out to a researcher or academic that could help draft the questions for the survey. Also, he suggested that a variety of strategies be implemented to distribute the survey to ensure diverse participation. Rivera said that this would be discussed at the next subcommittee meeting.

Commissioner Freddie Thon said that it would be critical to get participation from across the state and that the exchange of ideas was central to the success of the 2010 Strategy Summit. Lopez asked commissioners to email Jesusa with the names and emails of other individuals who could potentially participate with this subcommittee. Chairman Christian Gallo asked what encompassed "access to technology." He said that he believes that there are programs throughout South and Central America to provide low-income students with personal computers and asked if anything similar exists in the schools.

Chairman's Report

Gallo said discussed his and Lopez's participation in Latino Student Day at the Statehouse and commended Commissioner Mara Candelaria-Reardon on her efforts to organize it. He said that they had had a chance to chat with students and he was very impressed with the caliber of students that attended. He said civic education for Latino students is critical.

Thon said that several students from South Bend traveled for the event and that he is currently working with the local credit union to find resources to bring more students on four separate trips

to the Statehouse. He said funds have been secured by him for those efforts. Lopez added that the major challenge for a program like this is participation from across the state, and he asked commissioners to think about being more involved next year by pushing their local schools to participate. Thon said local Hispanic leadership groups should incorporate other elements, like essays, into the program at the local level.

Rivera asked how many students participated, and Lopez said that there were about 100.

Civil Rights Subcommittee report

Gallo said that he has wanted to focus the subcommittee on housing issues, and while he doesn't see a great deal of discrimination, he does see confusion in the community. He said that some banks are not providing loans to individuals attempting to use their ITN numbers instead of social security numbers, and he was curious as to what can be done to help these individuals. Lopez said that Commissioner Virginia Hernandez represents the Indiana Civil Rights Commission on ICHLA and should be consulted as a resource. He said that services are available in Spanish for those individuals who are willing to call and ask for counsel.

Gallo said that some of the restrictions are not clear and that banks are being overly cautious. Lopez said that workshops could be arranged at the community level through the Civil Rights Commission and asked commissioners to keep Hernandez informed as to where the information is needed.

Thon then said that there are a number of colleges and universities that are providing in-state tuition rates to students regardless of status. Gallo said that the commission should still be encouraging undocumented Latino students to pursue post-secondary degrees even if they feel there is a lack of hope for them professionally moving forward.

Commissioner Charlie Garcia said that employers are reluctant to hire young professionals that are not documented because of new restrictions in immigration law. Gallo discussed the intricacies of new restrictions for employers and noted that temporary identification numbers issued to families upon first arrival in the United States are no longer valid for employment. Lopez noted that new electronic measures are in place to verify status, namely E-Verify.

Both Thon and Rivera noted that efforts to keep Latino students from leaving the state are critical. Lopez said that it is important to remember that while the challenges facing undocumented students is important, documented Latino students are not performing. Latino students who are legal and eligible for both post-secondary and employment are also not attaining educationally in a way that is economically viable for the Latino community.

Garcia then said that a program for Latino families – whether it be the development of materials or talking points and the alignment of commissioners with a handful of high schools in their areas – would be important. This would be proactive, and the development of an actual program could potentially allow for additional funding outside the commission.

Following comments by Rivera, Garcia, and Commissioner Richard Espinosa about the need for greater career and technical trade education, Commissioner Joseph Cortes-Gurule noted that the State Department of Education has a program called Career and Technical Education Pathways that does have an academic focus that can funnel students into post-secondary or employment. Espinosa said that he had been a part of a workforce development and education program as a member of the Ft. Wayne Urban League. He said that in their experience, the requirements of random drug tests and mandatory classes had whittled down numbers.

Lopez said that in recent conversations with education experts throughout the state, one of the consistent commentary noting challenges in Latino communities is the fact that many families are here only for a set time period. Convincing those parents of the need for post-secondary attainment is very difficult because they don't plan on staying in the country long enough for their children to graduate. As a result, bringing revenue to the household becomes an even greater priority. Managing these families is a challenge, then, when there is a disconnect between agencies and families.

Commissioner Pedro Ledo said that his wife is a long-time Spanish teacher in Ft. Wayne and that her school has 34 different nationalities represented in the student body. He said she would be happy to attend a meeting in the near future to share her perspectives.

Gallo shared his thoughts on the pride individuals take in their work when given the opportunity and accentuated the need to get kids into environments that expose them to professional settings and encourage them to set professional goals. Thon said that the parents must convey to their children more care and higher expectations, because that's the comfort that gangs provide.

Business Subcommittee report

No report.

Health Subcommittee report

No report

New Business

Lopez said that a discussion about another statewide event would need to be had with the entire commission. Commissioner Herb Hernandez noted that it would be important to identify a way to obligate current fiscal year funding for some kind of statewide meeting, as funds cannot be encumbered into next year.

Executive Director's Report

Lopez said that he and Gallo had met with Kristin Shellman about the micro-lending partnership with Area V Agency in Logansport. The training module to help participants develop their business plans has been translated into Spanish and a couple of potential entrepreneurs have applied for loans.

He also discussed the partnership with the Indiana Association of Child Care Resources and Referrals, helping them convert their training program into Spanish video and audio. Additionally, 10 Hispanic-owned child care provider businesses are currently enrolled in re-certification programs and will be reimbursed once they have completed an adult ESL course through a WorkOne center.

Lopez then said he was invited to speak to students at the Latino club at Shelbyville High School. He said that the program coordinator had told him that the group had been formed following ICHLA's 2010 statewide meeting and was a perfect example of the coordination and best practice sharing that ICHLA can facilitate.

Lopez said that he had met with leadership from the Independent Colleges of Indiana to discuss ways to achieve greater reach into Latino communities. The organization is committed to Spanish language media and providing information to parents in Spanish.

Finally, Lopez noted that two pieces of legislation had passed during the 2012 session impacting the commission. First, all cultural commissions would, effective July 1, 2012, move under the umbrella of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission. The commission is currently housed there anyway, per an MOU with the Department of Workforce Development, but this change would solidify this change in code.

The second piece of legislation states that the commission could, effective January 1, 2013, hold conference call or electronic meetings. The measure must be included as policy in the commission by-laws, each commissioner must attend at least one meeting, and a minimum of seven commissioners would have to be physically present at the meeting in order for quorum and votes to be counted by those commissioners attending electronically.

Hernandez said that these changes should be reviewed at the next meeting, once the language of the bills had been decided and that, regardless of attendance or electronic quorum requirements, a minimum of 11 affirmative votes would still be needed to approve any measure.

Adjournment

At 4:24pm, the meeting was adjourned by the Chair.