



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS**  
*COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS*

WENATCHEE  
Commission Study Session  
April 1, 2005

**I. Call to Order.** Meeting called to order at 2:10 p.m.

**II. Roll Call.** Commissioners present: Diana Avalos, Ruben Baca, Faviola Contreras, Leo Gaeta, Yvonne Lopez-Morton, Lourdes Portillo Salazar, Gabriel Portugal, Homero Tamez, Graciela Villanueva Lopez, and Rebecca Villareal

Staff Present: Cindy García

Guest Present: Antonio Ginatta and Uriel Iñiguez

**III. Additions to Agenda.** Chair Gaeta added pesticide testing and monitoring and L&I worker safety, restoration of felon voter rights, and Thai workers coming in on H2A visas displacing farmworkers in the Yakima Valley. Chair Gaeta asked if any commissioners had anything to add.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez requested that the emergency drought declared by Governor Gregoire be added to the agenda.

**IV. Presentation on Limited English Proficiency Program with the Department of Agriculture.** Joanne Seufer from the Department of Agriculture explained how the Department of Agriculture has partnered with Washington State University (WSU) and Wenatchee Valley College (WVC) to work on education and outreach to farmworkers who are limited English speakers. Federal funds are used to reach the local area and the community. Ms. Seufer went on to explain that the Department of Agriculture would like to translate a lot of the English curriculum into Spanish.

Mr. Malaquias Flores of WSU explained the role of WSU in the partnership. The main focus of the program is to help Hispanic farmers develop business skills to run their small farms. Curriculum is being developed in Spanish to address some of the problems faced by Hispanic farmers as well as workshops. Mr. Flores explained that according to the Department of Agriculture defines a small farm as one that produces up to \$250,000 a year. The average piece of land a Hispanic farmer owns is 40 acres of fruit trees. The Othello area is different because they grow other crops there. In 1997 Yakima and Adams counties had 136 Hispanic farmers, the latest census information shows that in

2002, 1,800 small farms are owned by Hispanics. Mr. Flores went on to talk about the objectives of the program.

- Determine the most significant production and financial risks encountered by Latino farmers.
- Develop an educational program for addressing production risks.
- Develop financial plans reducing financial risks.
- Test and evaluate the tools described previously at pilot sites and incorporate any needed improvements.

Commissioner Contreras asked Mr. Flores if the workshops are free to the farmers.

Mr. Flores responded that they are.

Commissioner Avalos asked Mr. Flores what the level of education is for most farmers.

Mr. Flores responded that since most farmers come from rural areas most only have an elementary education.

Commissioner Avalos raised concern over the curriculum being developed, consideration of education level when developing curriculum.

Mr. Flores responded that the training manual being developed will be much smaller in size than the Anglo manual for farmers since some Hispanic farmers are not able to read in English or Spanish.

Commissioner Avalos asked how many participants the partnership will be trying to reach.

Mr. Flores replied that is a difficult number to come up with. The partnership will be advertising on the radio, newspaper and contacting farmers.

Ms. Seufer added that the workshops and training will be ongoing. The curriculum being developed will be at a sixth or eight grade reading level.

Commissioner Baca asked how long the program will be extended for.

Mr. Flores stated that it is for one year and they would like to extend it.

Ms. Seufer stated that the need is large. The hope is that the training and outreach continue for many years.

Commissioner Portugal asked how the program was handling the declaration of drought by Governor Gregoire.

Mr. Flores replied with current funding some of the training is on the drought.

Mr. Francisco Sarmiento spoke of the program WVC has to help out Latino farmers. The program has been in effect for 12 years. The program consists of helping farmers to produce fruit. With this partnership the WVC program is able to take the next step to help farmers with financial aspects of keeping up a farm. More than 400 students have gone through the program.

Commissioner Portugal asked Mr. Sarmiento if the program was free.

Mr. Sarmiento replied that potential students have to apply for admission to WVC and pay the application fee since the program is funded by WVC.

Commissioner Tamez inquired about the level of interaction between the program and the State Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Sarmiento replied that they work with the state a lot and the USDA.

Ms. Seufer added that she works with WVC on a daily basis.

Commissioner Villareal stated that one of the things the economic development committee does is put on workshops throughout the state. Suggested adding an agricultural piece to the conferences.

Ms. Seufer stated that the goal was to create awareness of the programs that are available and what is being done.

Chair Gaeta was pleased that the link was made between economic development and agriculture. Economic development is a crucial area that needs focus in terms of Latino owned businesses.

Mr. Flores stated that at these workshops they can teach farmers how to access USDA funds.

Commissioner Avalos asked what the legal status has to be to obtain a loan with the USDA.

Mr. Flores replied that the farmer has to be a resident or a US citizen.

Commissioner Avalos inquired about alternatives to that criterion.

Ms. Seufer replied that there are no alternatives. They are federal funds and have to be accountable.

## **V. Commissioner Reports.**

### **Commissioner Tamez:**

- Set up a booth for Mexican Consulate visit in March – saw 60 people.

- Meeting Governor Gregoire had with the Tri-Cities community.
- Attended a few WASL test talks with school and parents.
- Health care issues/concerns.
- Concern of limited number of agriculture jobs.

**Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez:**

- Meet with President of Yakima Chamber of Commerce. Starting a new diversity initiative.
- Attended bilingual election advisory committee meeting.
- Governor Gregoire Drought Task Team.
- Meet with community leaders throughout Yakima.

**Commissioner Portillo Salazar:**

- Bellevue School District Latino Youth Conference.
- Meet with parents and kids in school district – discussed what kids need, parents need for children to succeed in school.
- Approached by Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, interested in diversifying.

**Commissioner Contreras:**

- Set up a booth for Mexican Consulate visit in March – saw 60 people.
- City of Wenatchee public meeting to address racism.
- Emailed Principal at Brewster to check on status.
- LEAP conference.
- Farmworker housing project.

**Commissioner Portugal:**

- Governor Gregoire visit to the Tri-Cities.
- Preparing for Cinco de Mayo event in Tri-Cities.
- Meeting with Police Department
- Plymouth school bus issue – parents felt children were being mistreated; meet with superintendent. There is now a new bus driver for kids.

**Commissioner Avalos:**

- Meet with director of human resources from new Hilton Hotel in Vancouver – diversify workforce.
- Meet with Boy Scouts of America on national campaign to establish a Latino youth soccer league.
- Vancouver School District to help newly formed mariachi group with funds.
- Meet with Chief of Police.
- Vancouver School District looking at implementing a program similar to the Garrison Night School in Walla Walla.

**Commissioner Baca:**

- Held meeting with Elizabeth Ibañez (Mount Vernon Community Center) concerning future radio broadcast on Commission & Latino issues.
- Participated in Economic Development Conference in Wenatchee.
- Attended Washington State University – Whatcom County Organization Computer Wizards program orientation.
- Attended Bellingham Community Interaction Council – police department focus group meeting.
- Met with reporter Christina Johannes of the Bellingham Herald Newspaper, on how the newspaper could more effectively reach out to the Latino community.

**Commissioner Villareal:**

- Economic Development Conference in Wenatchee.
- Meet with new director of Small Business Administration (SBA).
- Worked on Strategic Alliance Memorandum (SAM) with SBA.
- Conference calls to plan Pasco Economic Development Conference.

**Chair Gaeta:**

- February health care legislative days.
- Executive Director recruitment.
- La Clinica – recruitment for board.
- First Steps meeting – prenatal access education.

**VI. Committee Reports.**

**Economic Development Committee – Commissioner Villareal:**

- Wenatchee Economic Development Conference – 20 people attended.
- Planning Pasco Conference.
- Dates for Yakima and Mount Vernon conference, not available yet, should be available by the time the Pasco flyers are printed.

**Education Retention Committee/Student Learning Committee – Commissioner Avalos:**

- Committee agreed to contact legislatures on bills still alive that affect education and health.
- State audit for the migrant education program requested by the federal government. Every time a family signs up as migrant the state generates money. After the audit it was discovered that many of the families did not qualify for migrant services. There are some questions on whether the state will take hits. It looks like there is talk of 10 percent of those monies being sent to Washington D.C. because of those findings.

Commissioner Avalos requested that a letter be drafted to Dr. Gomez and request how federal monies are used in individual school districts.

Chair Gaeta agreed.

**Action Item:** Chair Gaeta and Commissioner Avalos will draft a letter to Dr. Gomez regarding funding.

**VII. Executive Director Recruitment.** Chair Gaeta informed commissioners that there were 33 applicants at the time the announcement closed. A package is being put together to send out to each of the panel members. Panel members are, Leo Gaeta (CHA), Yvonne Lopez-Morton (CHA), Peter Antolin (OFM), Fred Olsen (Governors Office), Eddie Rodriguez (DSHS), Myrna Contreras (Community Member), and Tomas Villanueva (Community Member). Panel members will review the packets and prioritize the applicants that will be interviewed. Based on the top selected, background checks will be done and forwarded to the governor. This needs to be completed by April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**VIII. Restoring Voter Rights for Felons.** Chair Gaeta informed commissioners that a request was made to what the stance on restoring felon voter rights was.

Commissioner Avalos asked what percentage of felons are Latinos.

Commissioner Villareal responded that 33 percent of inmates in the Walla Walla State Penitentiary are Latinos.

Commissioner Avalos asked what the percentage was statewide.

Mr. Uriel Iñiguez said it was 10 or 11 percent.

Chair Gaeta reminded commissioners that this problem does not only affect Latinos, but a large number of African Americans as well.

Mr. Iñiguez commented that as a community member it's an issue that needs to be researched and paid attention to. A large population cannot vote because they are not citizens and of those that can vote, a large number are felons. It would benefit the community strategically, if this issue could be resolved.

Commissioner Villareal requested that more research be done.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar wanted to know who requested the information from CHA.

Community member Mr. Antonio Ginatta replied that the ACLU was the group that requested the information and they have all the research.

Chair Gaeta suggested taking the recommendation and doing more research.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez stated that the Yakima County Auditor has touched on this subject in the past. According to the auditor, if someone commits a felony, they pay their fines and complete their sentence; they may obtain a certificate and vote.

Chair Gaeta stated that CHA should approach this as more than a voting issue. More holistic, felons have to be reinstated into society.

Commissioner Tamez stated that CHA should be educated on the issue.

Commissioner Villareal added that other rights should be inclusive as well as the voting rights.

Commissioner Portugal stated that there is concerns that many convicted felons that come out of prison go through a revolving door. They come back into society and there are no opportunities for them. They know that if they re-offend, they have somewhere to go where they can sleep and eat.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar added that a bigger issue is that many undocumented immigrants driving without a valid driver's license, keep getting stopped and going back to jail, but that's not a felony.

Chair Gaeta stated CHA should look at the data.

**Action Item:** Executive Assistant García will contact the ACLU and request research to distribute to commissioners.

**IX. Legislative Update.** Community member Mr. Iñiguez stated that out of the 31 bills being tracked, only 20 made it out of committee.

Community member Mr. Ginatta stated that many of these bills will be coming back next session.

Mr. Iñiguez stated that commissioners should be addressing the budget with their legislature.

Commissioner Avalos wanted to know what the update is on the governors' report on the education committee.

Mr. Ginatta stated that the governor is still looking at doing more on funding for higher education.

Commissioner Tamez stated that the governor mentioned a lot of things in the budget that are not in the Senate budget. Not only funding for programs, but for childcare as well. Commissioner Tamez has concerns on where the money from the funding is going and will constituents have to wait another 15 to 20 years to see money get to early education.

Chair Gaeta elaborated on Commissioner Tamez comment; governor is making statements that are not included in the budget.

Commissioner Villareal questioned what would happen if the House says CHA is approved for 3 FTEs. Governor's budget approved CHA for 3 FTEs, and the Senate approved for 2 FTEs.

Mr. Ginatta stated that if that were the case, the budget will go to a conference committee. Representatives from both the House and the Senate will meet and try to come to an agreement on the budget.

Chair Gaeta stated that the legislative session ends on April 24<sup>th</sup>. There is a lot that can happen between now and then. Now is the time to talk to legislature.

**X. Additional Assignments.** Chair Gaeta explained that many community members and organizations request participation from commissioners. Participation needs to be included in reports. Tracking is not as good as it was last year and commissioners have been more active this year. Performance measures are visible and quantify request for more money.

**XI. Annual Report.** Report needs to be published by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Chair Gaeta requested that the chairs of the committees have something to submit by the meeting in May.

*Action Item:* Committee chairs will have articles for annual report ready by meeting in May.

**XII. Update on Move to GA Building.** Executive Assistant García informed commissioners that the move to the GA building was starting to take effect. Meeting was held for directors to pin point where electrical and data outlets would be placed. Executive directors' offices are not all the same size. It would cost too much money to move existing walls to create the same size office. Move in date is June 6<sup>th</sup>.

**XIII. Other Items.** Chair Gaeta drafted a letter to Governor Gregoire requesting a meeting (SEE ADDENDUM 1). Also drafted a letter to new Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) director, Robin Arnold-Williams (SEE ADDENDUM 2).

**XIV. Budget Update.** Chair Gaeta reported that in January CHA was \$190 in the black and in February CHA was \$1,540 in the black. Expenses incurred in February that have not been included in the reports. Money has probably been used up since there were many events in February (LEAP and economic development conference). Any activity involving travel or lodging needs to be coordinated with our executive assistant. Travel needs to be approved by chair in absence of the director.

Commissioner Villareal wanted to know if the economic development conferences were pre-approved for commissioners to attend.

Chair Gaeta replied that it was pre approved for February. It needs to be pre approved every time. Fiscal year ends in June.

**XV. Farmworker Safety and H2A.** Chair Gaeta spoke about the cholinesterase testing passing legislation two years ago. People have questions on what the outcome has been in two years. Lack of ability to enforce pesticide protection, and there is failure to comply. Representatives from the Department of Health saying a lot of good things are happening but the farmworkers are saying that it doesn't do them any good to have guidelines when there is not clean water and they do not have the proper gear. Chair Gaeta would like commissioners to consider this issue and see what CHA can do to improve pesticide conditions. The other issue is the H2A program, which is bringing Thai farmworkers to the Yakima valley and displacing Hispanic workers.

Commissioner Tamez stated that a few items have come up regarding the H2A program. Joe Morrison from Columbia Legal Services is familiar with the issue and is involved in a few lawsuits.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez asked how much impact could CHA have on a federal issue.

Commissioner Tamez replied that commissioners could contact federal legislatures and take a position. Commissioner Tamez added that currently he is volunteering for the Department of Agriculture monitoring program.

Chair Gaeta wanted commissioners as a Commission to determine how in depth to get involved in both issues. An intern is coming on and is interested in immigration policies. The intern can look at the impact being caused in the local farmworker community. This not only involves displacement of workers, and a more holistic approach can be taken. Workers coming in under H2A need housing and healthcare, etc.

Commissioner Baca stated that it would be important to get the view from the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (CAPAA).

Commissioner Avalos agreed and stated that more research needs to be done in order to proceed with addressing the pesticide issue. It is a revolving problem. It not only affects the farmworker, but it also affects the family members at home because the farmworker brings the pesticides home.

Commissioner Tamez informed commissioners that the safety pesticide conference held by the Department of Agriculture discussed the monitoring and educating they have done with L&I. This has resulted in a lot of folks being educated and finding out the inability of workers to put on their protective gear and the inability to properly wash themselves after spraying pesticides. Health clinics also need to be educated because individuals are going to health clinics requesting treatment and getting sick for a variety of reasons. Health clinics need to know how to detect illnesses caused by pesticide exposure.

Chair Gaeta requested that Commissioner Tamez develop a report for commissioners for the next meeting.

Commissioner Tamez suggested having the intern coming in should develop a background report on the pesticide issue.

**Action Item:** Intern will develop a background paper and submit to commissioners for May study session.

Chair Gaeta also stated CHA would request a presentation from Joe Morrison on the H2A issue.

**XI. Latino Legislative Day and LEAP.** Chair Gaeta recommended that CHA have a Latino legislative day in conjunction with LEAP.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez stated that she has approached several community members in Yakima and there is an interest and it should be separate from LEAP.

Chair Gaeta stated that a legislative day is a lot of work. Commission should not have to plan it, maybe take part in helping to set up meetings.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar suggested having a subcommittee.

Chair Gaeta appointed a subcommittee. Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez will be the chair, and Commissioners Contreras, Portillo Salazar, Portugal, Villareal and Executive Assistant García will be part of the subcommittee.

**Action Item:** Formal motion will be made at public meeting to form the subcommittee on discussing the possibility of having a Latino legislative day.

**XII. Fundraising.** Chair Gaeta informed commissioners that no fundraising has occurred in three years. Asked commissioners if they are serious about fundraising and generating funds.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton replied that writing grants would be a lot of major work.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar suggested a dinner or dance, a gala event.

Commissioner Villareal asked if the funds would be used for staff.

Chair Gaeta responded that they would not. Chair Gaeta suggested tabling the idea and revisiting it later as it keeps coming up.

**Action Item:** Commissioners will develop an opinion on how they feel about fundraising.

ADDENDUM 1

March 9, 2005

Governor Christine Gregoire  
State of Washington  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Gregoire:

First, I would like to extend my congratulations on your election as our next governor for Washington State. The Commission on Hispanic Affairs knows that from your past work as our state's Attorney General, you have clearly demonstrated your commitment and dedication to the needs of families in our state and we know that as Washington State's new governor you will continue that work.

Next, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce to you the Commission on Hispanic Affairs. As you are probably aware of, the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs was created by a Governor's Executive Order and established in statute in 1971. As mandated by the state legislature, the Commission's functions are to improve public policy development and the delivery of government services to the Hispanic community through the following means:

- Identifying and defining issues concerning the rights and needs of the Washington State's Hispanic community.
- Advising the Governor and state agencies on the development of relevant policies, plans and programs that affect Hispanics.
- Advising the legislature on issues of concern to the state's Hispanic community.
- Establishing relationships with state agencies, local governments, and members of the private sector.

With an 11 volunteer member commission representing Washington State's Hispanic community, the Commission is committed to accomplish its mission.

Enclosed with this letter you will find the Commission's latest annual report and a copy of the Legislative Priorities identified for the current session. To summarize, the Commission has identified issues in education, economic development, and health care to be a priority for the Hispanic community in our state.

In the current budget deficit environment that faces Washington State, we realize that tough decisions will need to be made. However, the pattern we have seen in the past is that often it is our most vulnerable and needy families that bear the burden of the cuts. An example of this can be seen by the changes in health care several years ago where thousands of immigrant children lost health care coverage resulting from budget cuts.

At this time I would like to request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to further discuss the work of the Commission and challenges faced by the Commission and the Hispanic community of Washington State. Due to the legislative session currently being underway, I would appreciate it if this meeting can take place prior to the session's adjournment.

I am honored to have the opportunity to work with you and am hopeful that working together we can better meet the needs of the Hispanic community. Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this request. I look forward to your prompt response.

Very truly yours,

Leo R. Gaeta, Chair

enclosure

ADDENDUM 2

March 18, 2005

Secretary Robin Arnold-Williams  
Department of Social and Health Services  
MS 45010  
Olympia, WA 98504-5010

Dear Secretary Williams:

First, I would like to extend my congratulations on your appointment as the Secretary of Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The role of DSHS is very important and crucial in our state as it provides numerous vital services resulting in a safety net for families across our great state. The Commission on Hispanic Affairs recognizes the importance of the services provided by DSHS to our Latino community and would like to continue working with your agency in better understanding and meeting the needs of the Latino community in Washington State.

This is a follow-up letter to some concerns that the Commission had raised to former Secretary Dennis Braddock. The concerns raised stem from an investigation conducted by the Division of Fraud Investigation (DFI) of the Mattawa childcare providers. The overall concern of the Commission was the manner in which the investigation was conducted and how this has been handled. Ultimately this resulted in the childcare providers filing a formal complaint with numerous allegations. I have attached a copy of the original letter we drafted outlining some of these concerns to provide you further background.

Although there were some conclusions made by a review of the allegations (see enclosed letter dated July 20, 2004 from former Secretary Braddock), it appears that there are still some unresolved items. Under your leadership, we ask that DSHS follow up with the items identified? I would like to request a status or an update on the implementation of the four points outlined by former Secretary Braddock.

Another item of concern that has been raised to the Commission recently is that under new policy changes being implemented by the Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCCEL) many Latino child care providers are losing their licenses or are having difficulty meeting the requirements in being licensed. This raises several concerns – is this pattern being seen across the spectrum of licensed childcare provider regardless of

ethnic differences? Many Latino childcare providers are indicating that they feel they are being singled out as a result of what occurred in the Mattawa child care investigations. Does something need to be done to help Latino childcare providers understand program expectations/requirements?

In light of what occurred in Mattawa, I see reason for DCCEL and DSHS to improve in processes to maintain quality child care services and allow for the effective management and accountability of services being provided. There is no doubt in my mind that some changes are necessary for this to occur. The overall goal for the Commission's inquiry is in assuring that Latinos childcare providers are being fairly treated. Latino childcare providers do provide an essential service for working families throughout our state.

I'm available to meet with you and your staff at your convenience to discuss these issues further. I hope that we can work together to resolve the above concerns.

Sincerely,

Leo R Gaeta, Chair

enclosures