



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

Olympia  
Public Meeting  
February 10, 2006

**Roll Call:**

Commissioners present: Ruben Baca, Félix L. Negrón, Yvonne Lopez-Morton, Lourdes Portillo Salazar, Gabriel Portugal, Homero Tamez, Graciela Villanueva-Lopez, and Rebecca Villareal

Commissioners absent: Rosa Cabrera

Staff Present: Uriel Iñiguez and Alicia Luna

Meeting called to order at 2:05 PM

**Approval of Minutes:**

Commissioner Villanueva Lopez made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 12<sup>th</sup> Olympia public meeting. Commissioner Baca seconded the motion. Vote was taken which resulted in all "yays".

**Minutes approved unanimously.**

Our February Public Meeting was held in conjunction with the LEAP Conference at the Red Lion Hotel. The meeting was carried out in two separate sessions with Latino youth/students, teachers, parents, etc.

The meeting commenced with introductions by the CHA Commissioners along with a summary of the Commissions function by the CHA Director. It was then opened for questions, comments, and concerns from those present at the meeting.

Ricardo from Mt. Vernon stated that a person that had TB was reported by the Skagit County Health Department to ICE and he wanted to know what the Commission on Hispanic Affairs role had been regarding this issue.

Commissioner Baca informed Ricardo that a small group of people from various community advocate groups had gone to the Skagit County Health Department to find out why this incident had occurred. The Health Department had had some

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misunderstanding regarding this issue, unfortunately a lot of the information sharing that occurred in the community scared the people and now they are afraid to go to the Health Department for fear of being reported. He also shared with Ricardo that the State Health Board had recently received a report of what had actually transpired. In addition Commissioner Baca informed Ricardo that the Commission had asked the State for clarification of the policy/protocol. The policy is that Health Departments do not report folks to ICE. He also told Ricardo that an investigation was in progress and that once it is completed they will share their findings with the advocacy groups. Commissioner Baca also said that he hopes that this does not occur in the future; however, if it does the Commission will take the necessary steps to address it.

Ricardo asked if anyone had gone directly to the person affected and asked him what exactly had occurred or perhaps asked the Health Department Director.

Commissioner Baca informed Ricardo that a memo from the State Department of Health had been sent to all the folks involved in this issue. He also informed Ricardo that the County Health departments are independent of the State and that the State can only advise them on what are acceptable procedures. The state did advise their Health department employees that ICE reporting is unacceptable.

Chair Lopez Morton asked the audience if there were any tenth graders present and if they had any comments that they were comfortable sharing with regards to the WASL.

A student stated that she was taking teacher training and advance college classes. Her plan was to go to College and pursue a career in teaching or medicine and was actively looking for private grants.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar informed the student that Bellevue had a program that involved taking parents to Universities so that they could see what University life was all about. She also stated that parents were also informed of the importance of higher education for our Hispanic youth.

Commissioner Lopez Morton informed those present of the recent appointment of a Hispanic as President of Eastern University.

Rosita Orozco from Walla Walla asked the Commission if there were any programs in her area that would help convince parents of the importance of higher education and which would assist in changing Hispanic parent's mentality towards college. She stated that her folks were from the old school and that they did not promote and or encourage higher education.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar suggested that she contact a school counselor to assist her with this issue.

Commissioner Lopez Morton suggested that she find a teacher, friend, or neighbor that her parents trusted who could advocate for her. She also stated that it would take a lot of hard work on her part but not to give up for it would be advantageous in the long run.

Rosita stated that she feels obligated to work to help support her Dad. She said that she thinks that this is perhaps the barrier that prevents her Dad from being supportive in her

college endeavor. She also said that she agrees that it is going to be a slow road and that she is aware that it is a cultural thing that females should not go to college.

Commissioner Portugal informed her that he has a program every Sunday from 11:00 AM to Noon (Nuestro Pueblo KZHR 92.5 FM) in the Tri-Cities that deals with raising awareness regarding education, housing, health, etc for all Hispanic communities. He also stated that he will put Rosita in contact with a mentor so that she may be able to continue her education.

Commissioner Tamez informed the students that there is a group of color in Spokane that funds grants for kids of color. He also informed them of the Harvard program, Victor Chacon's Walla Walla study program and Cynthia Selde from WSU as a contact for additional grant and or scholarship information.

A student from Cashmere stated that PAC meetings address various issues including; the challenges that kids who are not legal residents face and their inability to continue with their education. He said the Dream Act is a slow process and unfortunately federal loans are not available at this time. He stated that private scholarships are available; however, students will need to do some research. He also advised them that there are some laws that are being introduced that are anti-immigration and that these laws will make it more difficult to qualify for college funding.

Hermelindo from WA State University stated that access to higher education for farm workers is available. He also stated that the key for attending any university is to apply early and not at the last minute. He said that his suggestion was to apply to colleges and universities during their sophomore year.

Another question posed to the Commissioners was, "What kind of assistance can we expect to receive from the Commission regarding these issues?"

Director Iniguez informed them that he was going to attend a forum at WA State University to discuss these and other issues at the Governor level. He also advised them to push their counselors at school and to get them to act on their issues.

The Cashmere student asked if the Commissioners were willing to go to their school districts and help with these issues.

Commissioner Negrón asked the students how many of their parents participated in the PTA. Unfortunately only two students raised their hands. Commissioner Negrón stated that parents are unaware of their power and their right to go to schools and demand the same services as other students. He cited an example with Mt. View School in Olympia where active PTA participation of Hispanic parents increased simply by voicing their concerns and by information being sent out in Spanish. He also stated that we need to get rid of the myth that our voice does not count and that we are not going to be listened to.

Director Iñiguez informed the students that their parents have the power to call a meeting with their school districts and that he was willing to come out and assist.

Another student's question was, "What options do I have if I fail the WASL and am not able to graduate?"

Director Iñiguez informed the students that they get four opportunities to pass the WASL. This also includes an opportunity to attend a community college free of charge until they can pass the WASL or up until they turn 21. He also stated that other options will be available in the future and that constant changes will continue to occur until the test is culturally acceptable. He said that the Governor has introduced a bill to look at providing the test in Spanish. He also said that it will be interesting to see what the results of the first WASL tests (to be taken in March 2006) turn out to be.

A student from the Tri-Cities stated that most college applications are online and that many kids cannot access them due to the fact that they do not have computers at home. She also stated that the computers at school are not always available and that sometimes there is no access to the internet.

Director Iñiguez stated that he would bring this issue up at the WSU meeting for discussion and solution. He also stated that Counselors are supposed to link students to colleges. He said that it is their responsibility and or task to do so.

A parent pointed out that WSU's Gear Up Program at Moses Lake High School originally had a terrible communication issue with parents because everything was in English. They; however, were trying a new program and that parents on the advisory board were spreading the word about the change to their community.

Anna a senior at Moses Lake High School stated that she is not sure what is required to graduate and that Counselors at Moses Lake are not accessible or available. She also stated that they do not follow up on student issues/meetings nor do they mentor students. She believes that she needs to take math and science classes since she wants to pursue a career in medicine.

Director Iñiguez stated that this is not a new and that unfortunately it is a statewide issue. He informed them that the Franklin Pearce Model is currently being trialed in about forty school districts. He said that the plan is to implement this model in all school districts in the very near future.

Consuelo stated that she is nineteen years old a senior and she just found out the requirements for graduation. She said that WASL and SAT are foreign to her. She also said that she came to the United States when she was sixteen and failed the WASL because she did not know any English. Consuelo asked, "What happens to students who just got here and have not taken the SAT and or have not met any of the other requirements?"

Commissioner Portillo Salazar said that unfortunately most school districts didn't address this issue before but that they are making an effort. She also said that the Bellevue School District is working at getting this issue addressed; however, students need to voice their concerns to their school district.

Anna added that incomes of agricultural families are low and not enough to send their kids to school so they usually take their kids out of school so that they can help out with support of the family. She said that it is sad because these kids are often very talented but forced to work in the fields and in restaurants.

Commissioner Lopez Morton said that there is a Truancy Law; however, not always the solution to the problem. She also said that every community is working hard to try and provide options for situation such as these.

Director Iñiguez asked the students for input on how the Commission can help them address these issues.

A Moses Lake parent stated that there are many local organizations in Moses Lake; however, there was no unity. They have PAC meetings and a Migrant Council but lots of division in the Latino community. She also stated that she believed that there was a bill that would address these issues; however, she was not sure of the status of the bill. It supposedly would create learning centers that would operate in the evening and or during the harvest season.

Director Iñiguez informed the students that a new group called Washington Learns was put together by the Governor and that it included business owners, educators, etc. He said that this group was tasked to do a study of all the issues and at the end of the study they have to prepare a final report of their findings. He stated that the report is supposed to come out by the end of the year.

Blanca Herman stated that she came to the US in 1994 and that she has a seventeen year old son who is having problems with finding the resources and the information to get prepared for college. She also stated that kids without social security numbers have no future in this country.

Director Iñiguez informed Ms. Herman that we all need to reach out to our Legislators and ask for their support. He said that each email that is sent to a Legislator represents fifty to one hundred voices in their eyes. He also said that everyone has the power to write to the Legislators and be heard.

Commissioner Villanueva Lopez informed the students that 1079 in-state tuition is another slow but sure step towards higher education. She suggested that students take one class at a time at a community college. She stated that it is, unfortunately, a slow process but it is a step towards the end goal. She also stated that students should not let the system get them down, paralyze them, or deter them from going to college.

Jesus from CSU stated that there is hundreds of parent outreach programs state wide yet we are not all working together towards solving these issues. He questioned why there was no unity with the Consulate of Mexico, CHA, and other organizations. He also suggested to students to find teachers that are willing to mentor them and to look for opportunities but definitely do not wait for folks to come knocking at their door. He said that the University of Washington had accepted him even though he was undocumented and that Universities are willing to accept you as long as you have talent and have a good GPA.

Commissioner Negrón stated that students who do not speak English are unaware of all the scholarships that are available. He also stated that most scholarships are not being solicited perhaps because it is a complicated process. Commissioner Negrón stated that

## Commission on Hispanic Affairs

### Page 6

only 20% of those offering scholarships are actually receiving applicants. He agreed that the public school system is a failure and that there is much room for improvement.

Commissioner Lopez Morton stated that there is a bilingual list serv that was established by Dr. Gomez which she will send to any student that is interested in receiving it.

Marisela Martinez from Grays Harbor Health Department informed the Commission that the Aberdeen School District has an issue in their ELL classrooms. She said that young Hispanic ladies are constantly fighting in the classrooms and that she would like assistance from the Commission on resolving this issue.

Commissioner Negrón stated that he would assist with the issue since Aberdeen is his area of responsibility as Commissioner.

Commissioner Villanueva Lopez suggested that when we re-order pens that we include our website address so that when we hand them out to the public they will have all the CHA pertinent information.

Commissioner Villanueva Lopez also made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Negrón seconded the motion. Vote was taken and all voted “yay” to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 4:28 PM.