



**Indiana Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs  
Commission Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, August 22, 2013  
1:00pm – 3:30pm  
Indiana Civil Rights Commission Conference Room  
Indiana Government Center North  
Indianapolis, IN**

**Commissioners Present:**

Pedro Ledo, Jr., Senate Lay Member, Fort Wayne (Chair)  
Virginia Hernandez, Designee, Civil Rights Commission (Treasurer)  
Jesusa Rivera, House Lay Member, South Bend (TELEPHONE)  
Francisco Garcia, House Lay Member  
Rep. Rebecca Kubacki (TELEPHONE)  
Tina Little, Designee, Dept of Correction  
Rep. Mara Candelaria Reardon  
Gerardo Gonzalez, House Lay Member, Bloomington (TELEPHONE)  
Charlie Garcia, House Lay Member, Indianapolis (TELEPHONE)  
Christian Gallo, Senate Lay Member, Lafayette (Vice-Chair)

**Commissioners Not Present:**

Richard Espinosa, Senate Lay Member, Fort Wayne  
Guadalupe 'Herb' Hernandez, Senate Lay member, Fort Wayne (TELEPHONE)  
Seth Morales, Governor Appointee, Indianapolis  
Teresa Velez, Designee, Family and Social Services Administration  
Andrea Perez, Designee, Department of Health  
Lenee Reedus, Designee, Dept of Education  
Senator Frank Mrvan  
Senator Greg Walker

**Visitors:**

Chris Christensen, Indiana Legal Services

**Staff Present:**

Danny Lopez, Executive Director

## **Opening**

Chairman Pedro Ledo, Jr. called the meeting to order at 1:07pm, noting the lack of quorum.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Ledo noted that minutes could not be approved due to lack of quorum. Commissioners were asked if any suggested changes should be made to the minutes prior to approval at the August meeting, and no suggestions were made.

## **Approval of Financials**

Executive Director Danny Lopez said that no unobligated expenses had been made during the previous month and that the only budgetary items were related to salaries, wages, and commissioner per diems. Lopez said that the budget proposal for the coming year would need to be approved upon establishment of quorum in order to move initiatives forward.

## **Chairman's Report**

Ledo said he would be meeting with official from Fort Wayne Community Schools in the coming weeks and has been recruiting volunteers to help with language support for Latino parents during back-to-school activities there. He said he would report at the next meeting.

He also noted that, per one of the discussions had by the commissioners in previous meetings, he had engaged a handful of Latino small business owners to determine their needs and obstacles. Ledo said that it seemed to him that many of them simply lacked an understanding of basic American business practices, that a number of the operated essentially cash businesses and opted to remain operating the way they are.

Commissioner Rebecca Kubacki asked why Ledo thought they might be disinterested, and he responded that there may be a lack of understanding. Lopez asked Commissioner Charlie Garcia, previously chair of the IndyChamber's Hispanic Business Council, how many HBC members were truly very small businesses. Garcia said that not many were, mostly because, in his opinion, these businesses lacked the time to be involved and the understanding of the value of such an association. Technology and accounting were identified as top needs in a joint study done with Butler University. Lopez said that this was consistent with what he had heard recently from the Northwest Indiana Chamber of Commerce, where mom and pop shops were often disengaged totally or not participatory.

Lopez then asked if there were policy concerns that the State should be looking to address or if solutions were purely, at this point, at the community level. Kubacki said that she generally felt that public policy ought to be a last resort, of sorts, and that entrepreneurs in the Latino community, as in all communities, must take it upon themselves to take advantage of and better understand the wide breadth of existing resources already available to them. Garcia said that gaining a better understanding of business needs through a new survey would be helpful because the business climate had changed so much.

Kubacki and Garcia both noted that the commission should be recruiting local banks to reach out to the community to provide financial literacy. Lopez said that, in the past, some commissioners had raised concerns that banks would be interested only in recruiting new accounts.

Commissioners said that this was not a concern and that banks should be invited, in an open-forum format, to participate.

Commissioner Francisco Garcia said that in his experience many Latino businesses are afraid, though he's not sure why. He noted that it is very difficult for officials from local and state agencies to engage these business owners. Lopez asked what could be done to engage them, and Garcia said that, in his experience, many businesses choose to stay under the radar and have little interest in adopting American business principles.

Commissioner Jesusa Rivera said that having someone trusted in critical, and that her conversations were similar to Garcia's. She said that many of the concepts being discussed were new for this community. Lopez then asked what would get them out, provided a conversation was organized. Rivera said that preliminary discussions with them would need to happen first to make that determination.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Lopez began by talking about Hispanic Heritage Month. He said that an opinion piece he had authored, together with Rafael Sanchez of the Hispanic Business Council, would be running statewide in September.

He also said that the Commission would be represented at festivals in Indianapolis and other cities, though not sponsorship dollars had been spent.

Lopez said that an education bootcamp concept was in the works, initially to be conducted in Evansville and later in several places throughout the state. He also said that similar information was being made available on the ICHLA website, and he asked commissioners to send links to programs and services that should be included.

Rivera suggested to commissioners that they attend any Bibles, Business, and Badges Immigration Forums that they could make.

### **Old Business**

Lopez asked commissioners to continue reviewing the proposal for the strategic plan. This was pending quorum.

### **Guest presentation**

Chris Christensen of Indiana Legal Services, who directs the Migrant Law Center for ILS, addressed commissioners. He distributed information on his program, which is responsible for conducting outreach to migrant workers in Indiana on legal protections.

Kubacki noted that many workers do not have phones with which to call informational numbers. Christensen said that most, in his experience, do. He said that farmers are also given worker rights and responsibilities, and they are reminded continually that they must have the rights posted.

Christensen then discussed challenges facing migrant and seasonal workers in Indiana, including being transient, linguistically isolated, and located in very rural parts of the state. Encouraging them to speak out is a challenge. Living conditions are often poor, depending on the willingness of farmers to adhere to requirements under regulations by the federal Department of Labor.

Christensen asked Lopez to distribute materials to commissioners. Lopez said he would provide all commissioners with materials distributed by ILS.

### **Adjournment**

At 4:34pm, the meeting was adjourned.