



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

18-20 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Tel. (860) 240-8330
Fax (860) 240-0315
E-Mail: lprac@cga.ct.gov
Web Site: www.cga.ct.gov/lprac

Chairperson

Richard A. Cruz

Vice Chair

Elena Trueworthy, M.S.

Secretary

Emanuela Palmares-Leaf

Treasurer

Yolanda Castillo

Former Chairman

Isaías T. Díaz, Esq.

Commissioners:

Ramón L. Arroyo

Francisco Borres

Migdalia Castro

Roberto C. Fernandez

Ana Gonzalez

Jay Gonzalez

George Hernández

Dr. Agnes Quiñones

Dr. Eugene M. Salorio

Pablo Soto

Feny Taylor

Danny Torres

Executive Director

Werner Oyanadel

Special Projects Director

Lucía Goicoechea-Hernández

Associate Legislative Analyst

Orlando Rodríguez

Senior Legislative Secretary

Clarisa Cardone

MINUTES
LPRAC Regular Commission Meeting
October 15, 2014
City of Meriden – Council Chambers
142 E Main Street, Meriden, CT
5:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present:	Yolanda Castillo, Migdalia Castro, Richard A. Cruz, Ana González, Jay González, Emanuela Palmares Leaf, Dr. Eugene Salorio, Pablo Soto, Danny Torres and Elena Trueworthy, M.S.
Commissioners Absent:	Ramón L. Arroyo, Roberto Fernández, George Hernández, Dr. Agnes Quiñones and Feny Taylor
Staff:	Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director, Orlando Rodríguez, Associate Legislative Analyst and Clarisa Cardone, Sr. Legislative Secretary Gabriela Guevara, Intern

Tape 1 A

Chairman Cruz asked **Board Secretary Commissioner Emanuela Palmares Leaf** to do roll call. Quorum was established. He then asked Commissioner Soto to say a prayer for the He thanked Mayor Manuel Santos for having us at the Council Chambers in Meriden and thanked everyone who was present. He then passed the floor to Commissioner Soto who asked for a moment of silence for a prayer for the family that passed away in an accident that day. Then he thanked everyone present.

Public Participation:

Manuel A. Santos, Mayor of Meriden spoke about the immigration policies within the state and how to address some of the issues with illegal immigration. He stated that amnesty in a path for citizenship is very controversial. Almost 20 years ago over 6 million illegal aliens were given amnesty and back then the American people were told the borders would be secure. 20 years later, nothing has changed except the number has doubled. Without a secure border or an aggressive punitive immigration policy, this nation will continue to have the same problem in another 20 years. He conceded that the US Government cannot deport undocumented immigrants but Congress should not give them citizenship. One alternative, he suggested was to adjust people's immigration status by providing them a green card only. He asked LPRAC to seriously consider his recommendation and asked for LPRAC support it and to forward it to the Governor for communication to Congress and the President.

Mr. Oyanadel mentioned for the record that LPRAC has already taken an official position in regards to immigration reform – a position which has been approved twice in recent history. LPRAC's position in regards to immigration reform is one which is grounded in the equal treatment and one which ensures due process under the law to everyone seeking to adjust their immigration status. LPRAC is a strong supporter of the creation of a path to earned citizenship;

State Representative Hilda Santiago commended LPRAC for their visit to Meriden and suggested that LPRAC return to Meriden for another meeting in the near future. She also suggested LPRAC conducts similar forums in other cities where there are a large Latino community as well. She also suggested that LPRAC concentrate its efforts in job training, apprenticeships, and create more internship with companies for our youth. This in turn has the potential of improving education outcomes and better jobs for everyone. Rep. Santiago highlighted their legislative victory passing the Drive Only Driver's License legislation. This legislative victory, in her opinion could not have been reached if it wasn't for a greater diversity of Latinos & African American legislators in the Connecticut General Assembly. She suggested LPRAC work closer with those resources and go to them for support as LPRAC makes its recommendations for future legislation.

Chairman Cruz thanked State Representative Hilda Santiago and mentioned that the "Drive Only" driver's license issue was a collaboration between several stakeholders, advocates, and State Representative Juan Candelaria, Chairman of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus who worked very closely with LPRAC conducting his research back in 2009.

Mr. Oyanadel also thanked State Representative Hilda Santiago for her speech and for welcoming us to her town. He also pointed out that the success of the “Drive Only” legislation was due in large part to large grassroots movement in support of immigrant rights, which also included the support of LPRAC. As a matter of fact, former LPRAC Commissioner Carlos Candal brought this issue to the forefront of LPRAC back in 2009 where LPRAC conducted research with several experts on the field including Rep. Candelaria, Chairman of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. He also stated that LPRAC has for years has conducted these outreach events in urban settings such as New Haven, Bridgeport, & Willimantic. LPRAC just came back from New London, Waterbury and Danbury. As results of these outreach activities, we have now our first commissioner that is from the Brazilian Community.

State Representative Catherine F. Abercrombie welcomed everyone and then congratulated her colleague, Representative Hilda Santiago and has been a fabulous asset at the Capitol. Being part of the Latino Caucus has been huge for Meriden. State Representative Abercrombie said that she is the Co-Chairwoman of Human Services and is Sub-Committee Chair of Human Services for Appropriations too. She was elected in 2005 and thanked everyone for being here.

Councilman Miguel Castro said that he is the only Latino in the Council. He mentioned that the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus accomplished a tremendous milestone with the Driver’s License legislation. He spoke in support of immigrant rights saying that Congress should pass legislation that provides immigrants a path to citizenship. He also suggested that LPRAC address issues impacting the small businesses industry and the smaller businesses that are always left out of the discussion. They are the driving force of the economy.

Hector Cardona thanked everyone for being here. He just retired from the Police Department (32 years) and is the Chairman of the Puerto Rican parade in Meriden.

Mr. Oyanadel said that Mr. Cardona is somebody that is very known in the local town of Meriden and definitely someone that we should be proud of in the Puerto Rican Community both locally and statewide. He commended Mr. Cardona for raising his son as a leader. Mr. Cardona’s son is now one of the Co-chairs of a committee in the legislature focused on closing the achievement gap in our state.

Tape 1 B

Francesca Provenzano, MPH, CHES, RS, Epidemiologist 4 – Department of Public Health spoke on state laws regarding lead and the incidence of high levels of lead in the blood of children. Lead poisoning has declined but it is still disproportionately high among Latino children and in towns where there is a high concentration of Latinos. There are state subsidies for lead abatement but the program is underfunded. State funds are distributed to towns, which then determine how to administer the lead abatement monies. Much lead poisoning is from remodeling of older homes by homeowners who are not aware of the lead hazard.

Tape 2 A

Representative Abercrombie spoke about the two treatment centers. Here in CT, and lot of our hospitals are closing Pediatric Department, but we have two great children facilities in our state.

Judy Resnick – Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA) spoke on the growing demand for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) jobs in Connecticut and that Latinos are underrepresented in these career fields. She provided statistics comparing unemployment and salaries in STEM fields to other careers. She emphasized the need to get Latinos youth interested in STEM starting in middle school. In addition, school counselors are not aware of the coming demand for STEM skills in Connecticut and that professional development for counselors might be needed.

Tape 2 B

Marie Salazar-Glowski – State Department of Education (SDE) provided an overview of federal and state laws and funding for bilingual education. Both federal and state laws mandate bilingual education for eligible students but funding levels and the length of bilingual instruction are not specified in law. Schools do not report the number of hours of bilingual instruction. There is a shortage of bilingual teachers and SDE is working to alleviate the shortage using alternative certification methods. She “estimated” that state funding for bilingual education is roughly \$60/eligible student and federal funding is roughly \$150/eligible student. There is currently a state requirement of at least 20 eligible students per district to receive state funds; however, she does not know the justification for this threshold and suggested it might be based on legislation in Massachusetts.

Joseph Amenta – State Department of Education (SDE) spoke on testing requirements dictated by state and federal law. Governor Malloy has requested that the U.S. Dept. of Education reduce the amount of testing required by federal law. Annually in Connecticut, students spend 8 hours taking assessment tests, but the time spent in test preparation is not known. The state currently spends \$14 million annually for required testing and that amount will change when the new Smarter Balanced testing system is implemented. Mr. Amenta did not say what the change in testing cost would be.

Tape 3A

Chairman Cruz thanked Mr. Amenta for his presentation. He then said that he wanted to table all reports except for the minutes of the last commission meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made to approve the minutes of September 17, 2014 by Commissioner Soto and seconded by Commissioner Castro. Motion was adopted by voice vote with one abstention.

OLD & NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Torres thanked all commissioners for the scholarship event held last Saturday, October 11th, 2014, we gave each student \$1,000 each and stated for the record it was a great event.

State Representative Abercrombie thanked LPRAC for hosting their public forum in the City of Meriden and for inviting her. She said that they have 169 towns and have only about 15 urban districts which mean there are only a handful of legislators out there that are fighting day in and day out for these issues. It is really important when you guys go out to advocate to make sure that one, you have your legislators are on board with the issue and two, they are able to spread out because the suburban districts don't always get what we do in our district and we are always trying to educate them. There are 187 of us out there. Also, this "No child left behind" that's why we are in a terrible position that we are in testing.

Commissioner Salorio said that we invited members of the community to come speak. Now, we went three hours and they never got a chance and they were filling those chairs and they left. Either don't invite them or let them speak.

Motion made to adjourn at 9:00 p.m. by Commissioner Soto and seconded by Commissioner Torres. Motion was adopted by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted by,

Emanuela Palmares Leaf
Secretary
LPRAC Board

EPL:cjc