

State of Connecticut

# Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission



## 2007 Annual Report



M. Jodi Rell, Governor

Front cover images:

Puerto Rican Flag Raising event at the Capitol

LPRAC Executive Director Fernando Betancourt testifies in support of the In-State Tuition Bill

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## Mission Statement

To coordinate and provide access to resources by developing and recommending to the Governor and the Legislature policy for the advancement of the Latino & Puerto Rican communities.

## Chairman's Report

Dear Governor Rell:

It is with great pleasure that I report to you that the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission continues to stand firmly at the forefront of Latino advocacy in the State of Connecticut. We set our 2007 legislative agenda as a decisive response to the needs of the state's Latino communities and we aggressively sought to propose clear and actionable legislation for their benefit.

Immigration became the national hot-button issue of 2007 and given our state's large Latino population, it was no surprise that it attracted local attention as well.

As the debate raged, the LPRAC responded by providing research and expert opinions in response to requests from elected officials statewide.

During the 2007 legislative session we successfully supported legislation in support of:

- State-funded pre-K programs
- Funding for increased Latino participation in HUSKY programs
- Funding for HIV/AIDS prevention programs
- Language interpreters for Medicaid patients
- The establishment of incentives for municipalities to create low-income housing zones and monetary assistance for home rehabilitation
- Post-secondary educational opportunities for the children of undocumented residents
- Bilingual staff at the State Department of Veterans Affairs
- Emergency mortgage assistance

We also took swift action, meeting with the chancellor of the Connecticut State University System and the President of Central Connecticut State University, to address serious issues of misogyny and racial insensitivity at the university.

Throughout the year we collaborated with other organizations and institutions on issues of common interest such as:

- The United States Postal Service to promote our 4th Annual Hispanic Heritage Month Postal Stamp Exhibit
- The Secretary of State's Office on the 2007 Latino Voting Summit that took place Southern Connecticut State University
- The Hispanic Health Council on legislation concerning language interpreters for Medicaid recipients
- The National Puerto Rican Coalition during their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference that took place in Hartford, Connecticut.



This year we also hosted the Ninth Annual LPRAC Gala Awards Ceremony to honor the best and brightest that our communities have to offer. This year, we were not only able to recognize the achievements of prominent professionals and people dedicated to the Latino community, but we gave scholarships to four promising Latino high school students to help them achieve their dreams.

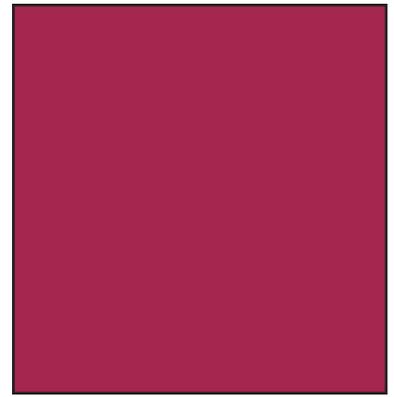
In this report you will find a listing of all our special projects as well as a breakdown of our budget and a comprehensive report prepared by our Principal Legislative Analyst. As we head into the New Year, we look forward to the challenges that lay ahead and we will continue to work diligently for the advancement of Latinos in Connecticut.

For the past 10 years I have served the Commission to the best of my ability and though my term as Chairman comes to a close, I am grateful for the support I have received throughout my time from the Commissioners, staff and public.

Sincerely,



Manuel García, Chairman  
State of Connecticut



## Biographies

### Manuel García, Chairman



(**Human Services**) was born and raised in Bridgeport. He is an employee for the City of Bridgeport Board of Education as an In-School Suspension Officer. He previously worked as a Controls Supervisor with many years of service in customer relations experience both in the United States and Puerto Rico. He is an active member of the community and is the Pastor of Iglesia Renacer Inc., located in Bridgeport. He provides religious service at the Danbury Federal Correctional Center for Latina inmates. Mr. García has and continues to serve on various boards. He serves on the Board of Directors for Free Forever Prison Ministries in New Haven, CT. Mr. García has served with various organizations including Chaplain with the Fairfield County Sheriffs Department of Connecticut, religious service provider at the New Haven Correctional Center, Associate Minister of Mission Good Shepherd Church, Inc. Milford, CT; a former Vice President of the Third Stone Ridge Co-op Board of Directors, The Bridgeport Republican Town Committee; Justice of the Peace in the City of Bridgeport, a former Vice President of the South End Community Center and a member of the Royal Rangers instructing boys and men in religious and moral values.

He was appointed to the Commission in 1997 by former **Governor John G. Rowland** and re-appointed in 1999.

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### Alcides Ortíz, Vice Chairman



(**Public Citizen**) of Hartford, was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. He has lived in Hartford for over 30 years. After graduating from Hartford Public High School, he maintained a full time job as a machinist while attending Capitol Community College where he studied Business Management. He is currently the Supervisor of Training at CTTRANSIT. When not at work during the summer months Mr. Ortíz spends most of his time coaching baseball. Mr. Ortíz is a certified Transit Ambassador Facilitator and has been certified as an instructor by the Transportation Safety Institute of the U.S. Transportation Administration.

He was appointed to the Commission in 2003 by former **House Minority Leader, Robert M. Ward**.



### Sonia Ayala, Secretary

**(Housing)** Born in Corozal, Puerto Rico, Sonia came to Hartford in 1959 at the age of five, with both parents and four sisters. She has been a single parent to five children, two boys and three girls and currently has eleven grandchildren. A graduate of Hartford Public Schools and she briefly moved to Massachusetts where she graduated from Broms Beauty Academy and Broms Barber Academy. She taught Barber school briefly before becoming a salon owner. Growing up, she lived in apartment buildings with absentee landlords who were unresponsive to tenants' needs. Living with no heat or hot water in roach and rat infested properties, she had to get involved. Shortly after becoming involved in housing issues she became a member of the West End Civic Association (WECA). Since 1999, she has served as an advocate and co-chair for the housing committee. Sonia has worked with city officials and the state attorney's office to target problem properties and worked to pass The Heat Surcharge Legislation Bill and The Landlord Identification Bill, that prevents property owners from hiding behind a post office box. She attends The National People Conferences annually, in Washington, D.C., to stay on top of issues in housing, community policing, racial profiling, predatory lenders, the community reinvestment act and abandoned properties. Sonia also served on the board of the Parkville NRZ from August 2000 to March 2004, and as co-chair of the governance board of Breakthrough Charter School from 1998 to 2003 during which time the school became a Magnet school.

She was appointed to the Commission on February 1, 2003 by then Speaker of the House Moria K. Lyons and subsequently by the **Speaker of the House, James A. Amann.**

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### Pablo Rivera, Treasurer



**(Public Safety)** Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico. Pablo Rivera has been a resident of Waterbury, Connecticut for almost twenty-two years. He and his wife Nancy M. Rivera are raising their 3 children, Joshua, Jonathan and Melitza. Mr. Rivera holds a Bachelors Degree in Human Services from Springfield College, and a Master in Education from Cambridge College. Mr. Rivera has been a Family Intervention Strategist for The Early Childhood Education Program for over ten years in the Waterbury Public Schools, as well as a Spanish Teacher for Adult Education Program. He also worked at United Way/ Infoline as a counselor, and The Head Start Program as a Family Social Service Worker. Mr. Rivera is also serving as a Consultant for The W.Y.S. School Readiness Program and Y.M.C.A. Readiness Program.

Mr. Rivera is currently a member of the following organizations:

- National Member of the Board of Directors Title 1 Program
- State Member of the Board of Director Title 1 Program
- Parent As a Teacher Program by State of Connecticut
- South End Neighborhood Association

The Following are just some of the organizations and activities he has recently been involved with:

- Member of the Naugatuck Valley Community Development
- Member of the Board of Directors of the Spanish Action Council
- Member of the Board of Directors Nilsa Marrero Cooperative
- Member of the Board of Hispanic Student Union at Naugatuck Valley College
- Member of the Board New Opportunity for Waterbury

He was appointed to the Commission in October 2005 by **James A. Amann, Speaker of the House of Representatives.**

### Ramon L. Arroyo, Past Chairman



(**Public Citizen**) of Hartford, was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Connecticut. Mr. Arroyo retired after 23 years of service from the City of Hartford Municipal Government as a Special Assistant to the City Manager. Mr. Arroyo has participated and volunteered in many organizations. He is currently the President of the Puerto Rican and Latino Alliance (PAC) of Connecticut. The following is a list of the memberships he has held:

- Friends of Pope Park, Board of Directors
- Parkville Problem Solving Committee, Board Member
- Hartford's Charter Revision Commission
- Capitol Area Substance Abuse Council, member of Board of Directors
- Hartford Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
- Hogar Crea of Connecticut, state board of directors
- Puerto Rican PAC, President
- Boys Scouts of America
- Long River Council, Volunteer Career Awareness Speaker
- Quirk Middle School PTSA-President
- María Sanchez Baseball Little League, Assistant Coach
- West Middle School, PTA-Vice President
- Neighborhood Legal Services, member of board of directors
- Hartford's Public Access Television, member of board of directors
- Hartford's Democratic Town Committee-Third District, Spokesperson

Former **House Majority Leader David Pudlin** appointed Mr. Arroyo to LPRAC in 1999. Mr. Arroyo was re-appointed in 2003 by then **Majority Leader James A. Amman**.

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### Carlos Alvarez, Commissioner



(Arts and Culture) - a native of Cuba has a long successful history as an entrepreneur and manager of two medical based businesses that provide financial success and employment in the community. Carlos has solid skills in financial management, general business operations and human resources. Carlos has a long history of community involvement. He is fully Bilingual in Spanish and English and has strong negotiation skills and strengths in organizational management. He is the current owner and Chief Operating Officer of Evis Respiratory Services and Medical Equipment based in Hartford, CT. Carlos is an executive board member of the Spanish American Merchants Association as well as a Director for Hartford Youth's Scholars Foundation. He resides in West Hartford with his wife and two children.

He was appointed to the Commission by former **Senate Minority Leader Louis C. DeLuca** in March of 2005.

### Luis A. Menéndez, Commissioner



(**Transportation**) of Hartford, was born in Havana, Cuba. In 1966 Mr. Melendez fled Cuba with other members of his family and was then joined in the United States by his father in 1969. After graduating from Penney High School in East Hartford he continued his education in Manchester Community College and Central Connecticut State University where he received his degree in Business Administration. Mr. Menéndez is now employed in his family business, *GLTU Company Cabinet Distributors*. Mr. Menéndez plays an active role in the Hartford Community in volunteering for many political functions as well as being a board member of SAMA, The Spanish Merchants Association. He is most proud of his wonderful family, his spouse Gladie and his two lovely daughters Vanessa and Cristina.

He was appointed to the Commission in 2003 by former **House Minority Leader Robert M. Ward**.

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### Ann E. Negron, Commissioner



(**Children and Youth Development**) - Ann is a resident of Willimantic, CT. She is a 1982 graduate of the University of Connecticut with a BA in Education . She has extensive experience in working with the community in Willimantic, first as an educator teaching various courses from the GED Exam preparation to ESL in middle school and to Spanish as a Foreign Language for the Windham Public School system. For the past 12 years she has worked for the State Department of Children and Families in various capacities such as an Investigations Social Worker, Child Protective Services Social Worker, and a Social Work Supervisor. Ann is highly skilled as an interpreter/translator in English/Spanish, knowledge of community and statewide resources, special education programs, and counsels' families, children and youth. In 1998 she received the University of Connecticut's Outstanding Alumni Award and in 1999 the State of Connecticut's Governor's Service Award. Ann is also the proud mother of her ten year-old son Joshua.

**Senate President Pro Tempore Donald E. Williams** appointed Ms. Negron to the Commission in 2005.

### Awilda (Saavedra) Reasco, Commissioner



(Health Development) - a native of San Germán Puerto Rico, has a B.A. in Psychology, from CCSU and an M.S.W. from UCONN. She currently serves as director for Pre-Collegiate and Access Services, PAS at Central Connecticut State University. PAS houses Educational Opportunity Program and Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation Program. She was the first Hispanic woman to serve as the Site-Coordinator of the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness Preparation Program. In addition to her professional accomplishments, Ms. Reasco serves as an advisor to the Latino Association Student Organization and was the first Hispanic woman to become a moderator to register voters in the City of New Britain. She frequently speaks at schools, universities, churches and community organizations on career topics and risk diversity issues. Mrs. Reasco has received several awards including Outstanding Club Advisor Awards, Youth Service Award for the Diocese of Hartford, YWCA Women in Leadership Award, CONNCAP and EOP Service Award and the Young alumni at Central Connecticut State University.

She was appointed to the Commission in February 2005 by **Senate President Pro Tempore Donald E. Williams, Jr.**

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### Norma Rodríguez-Reyes, Commissioner



Norma has been a resident of New Haven since the age of 5. Although having very humble beginnings her family has always believed that education and hard work is the key to success. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Connecticut with a major in Spanish and a minor in Biology. She has 3 sons: Tomás, a UCONN graduate, Andre a Quinnipiac University graduate, and Juan Carlos, who is in the U.S. Air force currently stationed in New Mexico. For the past 7 years she has owned La Voz Hispana de Connecticut, Connecticut's largest Spanish-language newsweekly circulating throughout the 9 cities with the highest concentration of Latinos. This Spanish newspaper speaks to over 125,000 consumers per publication. She has extensive experience in working with Senior Citizens as she was the Director of the Atwater Senior Center of City of New Haven for approximately 25 years where she planned, organized, directed, and controlled programs and services for over 1,200 Senior Citizens in the Fair Haven area of the City of New Haven. She is a Vice-Chair of the New Haven Democratic Committee and was the first Hispanic as a State Central Committee Member from 1984-1988. She is also a certified moderator and a former Assistant Registrar for the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward. Norma's community involvement is widespread. From 1995-1997 she served as a member of the Board of Directors for LULAC Headstart, a program that focuses on the educational needs of infants to 4 years old. She served as a Secretary of the Board of Directors for the Latino Youth Development, an organization with programs geared toward Latino youth and their families. She has coordinated fund raising events to give scholarships to students entering colleges and universities through the Star of Jacob Scholarship Fund. Presently Norma mentors an 8<sup>th</sup> grader from Saint Rose School at Yale New Haven Hospital and serves as a board member for SAMA, the Spanish American Merchants Association.

Ms. Rodríguez-Reyes was appointed to the Commission in 2003 by **Senate Majority Leader Martin M. Looney.**

### Ed Rodríguez, Commissioner



Ed Rodríguez is a Founding Partner, and President of Sandoval Associates, LLC., a full service management-consulting firm serving clients in the areas of business strategy, diversity, finance, operations and supply chain management. He leads the business development, client relations, and strategy development efforts for Sandoval. He has over 25 years of international sales, marketing and general management experience in the chemical, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, detergent, and plastic additives industries. He specializes in strategy development, supplier and workforce diversity, sales/negotiation training, and work process analysis. He has held executive management positions and consulted for firms such as Union Carbide Corporation, 3V Incorporated, Verizon, and Motorola.

Prior to joining Sandoval Associates, Ed was the VP of Sales, Marketing and Strategy at 3V, Incorporated, where he was responsible for transforming the company from a “Manufacturing Driven Organization” to a “Business/Market Driven Organization”. Prior to 3V, Mr. Rodríguez was the General Manager of Union Carbide’s Heat Transfer Fluids business. As GM he was accountable for the fundamental health and growth of a global specialty chemicals business, along with creating the vision and strategic direction required to achieve those results. In addition to his day-to-day management and leadership responsibilities, Mr. Rodríguez played a critical role with key customers and suppliers, was responsible for product risk management and made all business pricing decisions.

Ed is a recognized expert on a range of subjects such as strategic planning, diversity, business development, and work process analysis. He has lectured on these topics at various esteemed forums, including the Dolan School of Business, Hispanic Support Organization, CMSDC Trade Expo, and USHCC.

Mr. Rodríguez was educated at University of Puerto Rico, where he received a Bachelors of Science in Chemical Engineering. He also holds an MBA from Dolan School of Business, at Fairfield University, and is a graduate of Union Carbide’s Executive Management Program at Leonard N. Stern School of Business, NYU and Villanova University. Ed has served on the boards of the Music and Arts Center for Humanity (MACH), Town of Stratford Tax Assessment, Hispanic Merchants Association, Connecticut Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC), Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation Distribution board, and Puerto Rican Club among others. He also advises individual members for several not-for-profit boards as well.

Finally, Ed is an active member of the Stratford, CT community where he and his wife Vivian reside with their two children, Eddy and Patricia.

He was appointed to the Commission in February 2007 by **Senator Louis C. Deluca, former Senate Minority Leader.**

### Ivette Servera, Commissioner



(**Small Business and Economic Development**) of Farmington, works for the State of Connecticut Judicial Department, Adult Probation, at the Bristol office. She attended Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport where she received a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work with a minor in Sociology. Ms. Servera is a member of many community organizations including: past President of Handicapped Children of Puerto Rico, Bridgeport; La Danza, Bridgeport; Executive Board of Boys Scouts; President of La Casa De Puerto Rico; Leadership Greater Hartford –Marketing and Education Committees; 2nd President of Hartford Lions Club; ASPIRA Hartford effort; Hispanic Journalists Association; Connecticut Probation and Parole Association; and Republican Hispanic Women's Task Force. She volunteers with the American Red Cross on the Disaster Action Team and is a Community Liaison Volunteer. She is currently a board member with the United Way.

Former **Governor John G. Rowland** appointed Ms. Servera to LPRAC in 1999 and 2003, and reappointed by Governor M. Jodi Rell in 2007

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### Maritza Tirú, Commissioner



(**Education**) of Waterbury, is the Director of Career Development and Placement at Naugatuck Valley Community-Technical College in Waterbury. She has taught English as a Second Language at the college. She has a Master's Degree from the University of Connecticut. Ms. Tirú is well known in the community and is very involved in many local organizations. These include: the Chamber of Commerce – Waterbury Leadership Program, Community Vision for Waterbury, Vice-Chair of the Educational Task Force, Literacy Volunteers of America – Waterbury Chapter, Mayor's Task Force Against Drugs, Spanish Action Council – Past President 1992-1994, School-Based Health Center Planning Committee, American Red Cross – Waterbury Chapter. Waterbury PRIDE-N.A.A.C.P., CT Trails Girls Scout Council, Get Them Off Program (GTOP), Minority Empowerment Coalition – Vice-President, Northwest Collaboration Committee, UCONN Advisory Board, Waterbury Area Services Team, The Displaced Homemaker Program Advisory Board and Youth Advocacy Association of Greater Waterbury. Ms. Tirú was recently selected to serve a two-year term to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. She is also the student advisor to the Black Student Union and the Hispanic Student Union at the college.

Ms. Tirú was first appointed to the Commission in 1995 and reappointed in 1996, 1999 and 2004 by former **Governor John G. Rowland**.

## The Commission Shall:

1. Review and comment on any proposed state legislation and regulations that would affect the Latino and Puerto Rican populations in the state and provide to the members of the General Assembly copies of any such comments
2. Advise and provide information to the Governor on the state's policies concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican communities
3. Advise the Governor concerning the coordination and administration of state programs serving the Latino and Puerto Rican populations
4. Maintain a liaison between the Latino and Puerto Rican communities and governmental entities, including, but not limited to, the General Assembly
5. Encourage Latino and Puerto Rican representation at all levels of state government, including state boards and commissions, and maintain an accessible list of prospective appointees who are members of the Latino or Puerto Rican community
6. Secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of the Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state
7. Work in consultation with the joint committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to legislative management for the purpose of establishing a plan of short-term and long-term initiatives based on the needs of the Latino and Puerto Rican community and
8. Prepare and submit to the Governor an annual report concerning its activities with any appropriate recommendations concerning the Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state and submit a copy of the report to the joint committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to legislative management, which committee shall distribute a copy of the report to each member of the General Assembly

*(Excerpt from Section 2-120(c). Chapter 23d  
of the Connecticut General Statutes.)*

## Executive Director's Report



Executive Director  
Fernando Betancourt

Dear Governor Rell:

I am proud to report that in 2007 the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission continued to expand its presence and sphere of influence statewide.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the state's immigrant communities faced many difficult issues this year and the LPRAC seized the opportunity to continue to grow in its role as an advocate for the state's Latino citizens. Whether it was funding for state-sponsored healthcare programs, low-income housing zones, the illegal trafficking of persons, educational opportunities for immigrant children or incidences of racial discrimination or intimidation, the LPRAC successfully stood as the voice of the community.

The commission saw an increase in its role as a tool for elected officials in need of information or expert counsel when dealing with complex issues related to the Latino populations they represent. This is one aspect of our work that we take great pride in and will continue to do whenever we are called upon.

Because the breadth of our Legislative Agenda continues to expand year after year, we will be adding a second legislative analyst to our staff in 2008 in an effort to maintain the quality of our work. It is our sincere hope that doing so will allow us to further build upon our legislative agenda and our ability to advocate on a wider variety of issues.

In conclusion, I offer that our success this year is a testament to our continued ability to build lasting cooperative partnerships and strategic alliances with people and organizations that offer valuable insight, allowing us to effectively address current and relevant issues with the legislature.

We are excited by the possibilities that 2008 holds for us and look forward to another successful year representing Latinos in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fernando Betancourt".

Fernando Betancourt,  
Executive Director

## Special Projects and Activities

### Tribute to Hispanic Veterans

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission held its first Tribute to Hispanic Veterans on May 17, 2007. The event honored Latino members of all branches of the armed forces with a special focus on the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the United States Army. Based in Puerto Rico, the 65<sup>th</sup> was a segregated (all Latino) regiment that became known for its bravery and fierceness in battle during heavy action in World War II and the Korean War. Despite being decommissioned when the Armed Forces were desegregated, the Borinqueneers, as they became known, remain one of the most highly decorated military units in history. With so few members of the 65<sup>th</sup> remaining and so many Latinos serving in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it was important for us to pay tribute to those Latinos giving their lives for this country.



Major Lesbia I. Nieves and Special Projects Coordinator and Grant Writer Lucy Goicoechea-Hernandez at LPRAC's Tribute to Hispanic Veterans.

### Latino Voting Summit

At the invitation of the Secretary of State's Office, the LPRAC was a collaborator and an active participant in the 2007 Latino Voting Summit. The event aimed to address issues of Latino civic engagement, voter registration and election turnout ahead of the 2008 elections. LPRAC Executive Director Fernando Betancourt served as a moderator for a panel discussion titled, "Latino Demographics, Civics Education, and Leadership Development." As a result of the event a steering committee was established by the Secretary of State's Office to ensure that concepts discussed at the voting Summit are explored and implemented. The LPRAC continues to participate on that committee.

### Sponsor Recognition & Hispanic Heritage Postage Stamp Unveiling Ceremony

On October 5, 2007, the LPRAC held a ceremony to recognize founding board members Ramón Alfonso, Manuel Díaz, Yasha Escalera, Evelyn Mantilla, Efraín Rosado, Américo Santiago, Ramón Serbia (R.I.P.), Maritza Tirú, Salvador Vázquez, and Dr. Alberto J. Rodríguez, and longtime sponsors Bank of America and GlaxoSmithKline.

Both groups were celebrated for their vision and dedication in helping to establish and support the advancement of the Latino community in the state of Connecticut. Over the years Bank of American and GlaxoSmithKline have contributed more than \$50,000 to sponsor LPRAC events and activities.

As part of the activity the LPRAC, in partnership with the United States Postal Service, unveiled the newest addition to its collection of Hispanic Heritage Postage Stamps. The Mendez v. Westminster stamp pays tribute to a landmark 1947 case in which five Mexican-American fathers challenged school segregation in California, six years before the famous Brown v. The Board of Education. The exhibit, the only one of its kind, now boasts 24 prints honoring important people, places and events in Latino and American history.

### Post University Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration

The LPRAC and Commissioner Maritza Tirú participated in Post's University's annual celebration of Hispanic heritage. The Commission provided its collection of Hispanic Heritage Postal Stamps as an educational tool at the event, with staff available to answer student questions on the importance of the people, places and



SSG. Juan Luis Cruz, Major Lesbia I. Nieves and MSGT. Annie Ortiz at the Puerto Rican Flag Raising at the Capitol.



Commissioner Maritza Tirú is honored for her dedication.

### Fourth Annual Latino Heritage Postal Stamp Exhibit

For the fourth consecutive year, the LPRAC, joined the United States Postal Service in presenting the Hispanic Heritage Postage Stamp Exhibit. The 24-stamp collection, which pays tribute to people, places and events of cultural significance not only to the Latino community but to the nation at large, was on display in the concourse of the Legislative Office Building from September 4 to September 28, 2007.

The exhibit proudly displays how deeply Latinos are woven into the fabric of this country. Roberto Clemente. The Alamo. Frida Kahlo. Cesar Chavez. Desi Arnaz. These names are as much a part of American history as they are Latin American History and this year, the commission took it one step further by taking the exhibit on tour across the state.



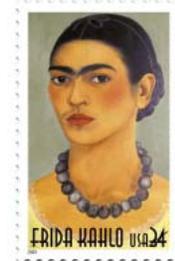
*Maria Sanchez Elementary School Principal Myrella Lara, LPRAC Executive Director Fernando Betancourt and Hartford Postmaster Judith L. Martin.*

It is no secret that many Latino children in Connecticut and across the country lack positive role models. As part of our mandate to “secure appropriate recognition for the accomplishments and contributions of Latino and Puerto Rican populations,” the LPRAC took the exhibit on a tour of schools and universities across Connecticut, using it as an educational tool and source of cultural pride during Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15 – Oct. 15). To date, the exhibit has been displayed at Eastern CT State University, Post University and Maria Sanchez Elementary School.

The LPRAC continues to be the only organization in the United States building and displaying such a culturally relevant exhibit of postage stamps and on October 5, 2007, we unveiled the newest stamp in our collection – Mendez v. Westminster. This landmark case pitting Mexican American immigrants against Westminster School brought school desegregation to the forefront in 1947, six years before Brown v. the Board of Education.

This project is lead by our Public Information Officer, Karlo X. Ruiz, who works closely with with Juan Luis Cruz, Hispanic Programs Specialist for the U.S.P.S. Other stamps in the exhibit include:

- Spanish American War
- Southwest Settlement
- Padre Felix Varela
- Cinco de Mayo
- Salsa
- Merengue
- Desi Arnaz
- Panama Canal
- Hispanic Americans
- Roberto Clemente
- Cesar Chavez
- Frida Kahlo
- Cha-Cha-Cha
- Mambo
- Ritchie Valens
- José de San Martín
- The Alamo
- Settlement of Florida
- Ponce de Leon
- San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Luis Muñoz Marín
- Puerto Rico Election
- Mexican Independence



## 9th Annual LPRAC Gala Awards Ceremony

On October 7, 2006, the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission held its 9th Annual Gala Awards Ceremony at Foxwoods Resort and Casino. The Banquet brought together more than 700 guests from throughout Connecticut to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of Latino citizens in the state.

The LPRAC also proudly recognized four college bound students with scholarships totalling \$10,000.



LPRAC Commissioners (L to R): Awilda Reasco, Alcides Ortíz, Maritza Tirú, Ramón L. Arroyo, Ivette Servera and Carlos Alvarez



Moraima Gutierrez and Ednita Nazario



Fernando Betancourt, Jasmin Emelis Agosto and Ramón L. Arroyo

This year's honorees were:

**Latina Citizen of the Year:**

Dr. Estela López

**Latino Citizen of the Year:**

Dr. Wilfredo Nieves

**Community Service Award:**

Guakia, Inc.

**Promesa Youth Awards:**

Jasmin Emelis Agosto

Anna María Conde

Adrian Cortéz

Hector Zayas

**Lifetime Achievement Award**

Ms. Ednita Nazario

By recognizing these outstanding individuals and organizations, we met our State mandate to promote awareness and secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of our community.

## End of Session Report

# Connecticut General Assembly 2007 Regular & Special Session

By Werner Oyanadel, Principal Legislative Analyst

This document provides a summary of legislation that the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) identified as a priority during the 2007 regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly in compliance with the Commission's legislative mandate as stipulated in section 2-120 of the Connecticut General Statutes.<sup>1</sup>

The past year has been a successful one for the LPRAC in terms of what we were able to accomplish. In 2007 we successfully recommended to the legislature additional funding for educational programs, and provided extensive counsel to legislators.

In specific, the LPRAC played an important role in the legislative debate on increased access to higher education for Latino immigrants attempting to further their education in Connecticut, increased affordable housing, tax incentives for low-wage workers, HIV/Aids, early childhood education, Latino military veteran affairs and universal healthcare for Latino families just to mention a few. Although these initiatives did not pass to the extent that we advocated for, we are pleased to observe a significant investment in the goals that the LPRAC has prioritized as measured by the growing amount of organizations and legislators that are joining together in support of a more comprehensive approach to the previously mentioned issues.

The following legislative proposals were adopted into public acts during the 2007 legislative session, and included our commission's recommendations as follows:

**Education Reform** – The LPRAC recommended policy for the creation of high-quality preschool education for all students in order to address the highly documented achievement gap in Connecticut between Hispanic/African American students and their White/Anglo Saxon counterparts – our internal research tells us that one possible contributor to the wide disparity may be the lack of available preschool education to the poor and ethnic students in Connecticut. The Connecticut legislature and the State Department of Education agreed on the importance of developing a system that will look at publicly funding pre-K programs and \$900,000 were allocated in the state budget for FY 08 and an additional \$900,000 in FY 09 to accomplish this and other goals. LPRAC Executive Director, Mr. Fernando Betancourt is currently working with the new Commissioner of the Department of Education, Dr. Mark K. McQuillan and Deputy Commissioner of Education, Dr. George E. Coleman on additional recommendations on areas dealing with the dropout rate, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the achievement gap.

**Husky Program** – A new agreement was reached between the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services and the LPRAC to develop and implement outreach efforts through the Latino media to increase Latino children's enrollment in the HUSKY program. This is a new effort to inform the Latino community of free health care initiatives targeting Latino children. (SB 1, SB 1484 – Public Act 07 – 185 § 8 & 9)



Principal Legislative Analyst Werner Oyanadel and Senate President Pro Tempore Donald E. Williams.



Former Congressman Rob Simmons and Commissioner Luis Menéndez

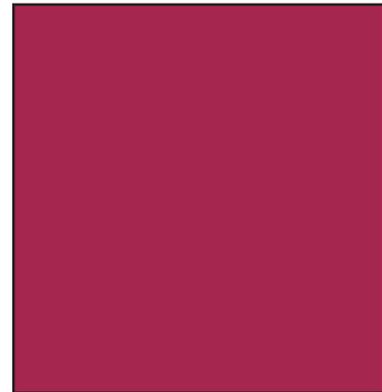
**AIDS Prevention Programming / Ryan White/** – The HIV illness rate in urban areas of the state has continued to increase, especially affecting Latino and African-American communities. During the legislative session there was an important debate between the executive body and the legislature about how to best prioritize funding on this issue. For example, the Appropriations committee agreed to fund \$800,000.00 for the next biennium for services formerly supported with the Title I Ryan White, which was cut by the federal government effective 3/1/07. The Appropriations committee also funded \$500,000 in each of FY 08 and FY 09 for HIV prevention education programs. On the other hand the Executive body would have not provided any funding to these programs. The LPRAC advocated in support of the recommendations provided by Appropriations Committee. The final budget agreement provided \$7,906,553 in FY 08 for AIDS Services, \$199,177 in FY 08 for Community Services Support for Persons with AIDS, and \$490,909 for a Needle and Syringe Exchange program. The funds are exactly the same in FY 09. (HB No. 8001 – June Special Session, Public Act No. 07-01)

**Interpreters** – The LPRAC was also successful in supporting legislation mandating language interpreter services for Medicaid patients. (SB 1484 – Public Act 07 -185 § 1)

**Housing** – The LPRAC and a coalition of housing advocates were successful in having the legislature pass legislation authorizing the creation of incentives for municipalities that create zones allowing affordable housing construction, and monetary help to rehabilitate aging public housing in need of repair. (SB 1500 Sec. 33 & 38 through 49)

**Higher Education/Immigration** – The LPRAC was also instrumental in advising the legislature on the benefits of adopting the post secondary school educational opportunities bill for children of undocumented immigrants. The proposal was favored by many elected officials, the leader of the State University System, the Connecticut Attorney General, the clergy leadership and a broad coalition of organizations throughout Connecticut and most importantly voted favorably by both chambers of the Connecticut General Assembly. The bill was ultimately vetoed by the Governor shortly after the bill became a public act. (HB – 5329 – HB 5656 – Public Act 07-135)

**Hispanic Veteran Affairs** – The LPRAC was also part of a successful coalition that advocated in support of Hispanic veterans for a new mandate requiring the State Department of Veteran Affairs to hire bilingual staff. The bill was introduced by State Representative Kelvin Roldan (D-4<sup>th</sup> House District) in collaboration with the Hispanic American Veterans of Connecticut, Inc. The bill was given a unanimous vote in both chambers of the CGA and signed into law by the Governor on June 11th, 2007. Specifically, the CGA approved a bill calling for the State Department of Veteran Affairs to hire a veteran service officer proficient in both English and Spanish. The new requirements take effect after July 1, 2007, and supporters hope to see the measure instituted at the federal level. (HB – 5799 – Public Act 07-97)



Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez,  
Universal Health Care  
Foundation of Connecticut  
President Juan A. Figueroa  
and LPRAC Executive  
Director Fernando  
Betancourt

**Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program** – the LPRAC recommended a bonding allocation of at least \$5 million to re-start the Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program, which stills needs to be analyzed by the Connecticut legislature in the month of September.

**Earned Income Credit Tax** – The LPRAC recommended the creation of a state Earned Income Credit Tax to help low-wage Latino workers increase their wealth potential. This legislative idea is broadly supported by many elected officials in Connecticut as an important tool to help decrease poverty in the state. Unfortunately this legislative idea was not included in the budget deal this year. The legislature did, however, assemble an ongoing panel of experts on the issue that will provide recommendations for the next legislative session. (HB – 5127 – SB 146)

**Human Trafficking** – The LPRAC is a member of the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons and in the 2007 session we collectively recommended the continuation of the task force with a few structural adjustments, including, but not limited to, the structural change from a task force to a permanent council. The new council will consult with governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop recommendations to strengthen state efforts to prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute traffickers. (Proposed Bill No. 398, Public Act 07-107)

**LPRAC Budget** – The LPRAC recommended adding a new legislative analyst to the staff of the LPRAC. The legislature agreed with our recommendation and the final state budget document included all the funding necessary for this new position accordingly. The state budget also included the monetary resources for the operations of the LPRAC, which totals \$ 571,636 dollars for the FY 2007-2008 and \$ 600,119 dollars for FY 2008-

### The State Budget

**Juvenile Justice Reform** – the budget deal also included the change of returning 16 and 17 year olds to the juvenile justice system, a change which the LPRAC supported and provided testimony. The budget provides \$15 million during the biennium to enhance services to 16 and 17 year old offenders.

**Human Services** – the new state budget includes specific state funds for Human Resource Development-Hispanic Programs within the Department of Social Services budget. In FY 2007-2008 those funds total \$1,007,671 plus an additional \$5,087 dollars for a separate Human Resource Development for Hispanics program. The numbers are the same for FY 2008-2009.

**Health Care Initiatives** – The CGA made some significant policy changes within the budget that included the following list with the most significant changes:

- Extend HUSKY to all uninsured newborns to 6 months
- HUSKY expansion to pregnant women (from 185% to 250% FPL)
- Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
- Asthma Disease Management Program
- Birth to three expansions

**Education Spending** – The budget includes \$1.81 billion in FY 08 and \$1.89 billion in FY 09 in Education Cost Sharing grants. This signifies an increase of \$181.8 million for FY 08 and \$80 million in FY 09. The budget also

### Proposals tracked by the LPRAC that did not pass the 2007 Session

**Election Day Registration** – To promote voter participation by permitting individuals to register and vote on the day of a regular election (HB 6251)

**Making English the Official Language** – The LPRAC is opposed to making English the official state language. (HB 6628) – Bill died in committee

**State Funds for CAUSA** – To provide funding for CAUSA to assist municipalities with a disproportionate share of students with special needs and to assure continued funding for social services to the Latino population (HB 6278)

**State Funds for Casa Otoñal** – To provide funding for Casa Otoñal for support services such as life skills education, gun violence prevention, teenage pregnancy prevention and job search assistance for truant students (HB 6511)

**State Funds for Junta for Progressive Action** – To provide funding for JUNTA for Progressive Action, Inc. a non-profit organization, for social services such as life skills education, gun violence prevention, teenage pregnancy prevention and job search assistance to truant students (HB 6513)

**Linguistic Access in Hospitals** – To expand and improve patient access to linguistic services in acute care hospitals (SB 1342)

**Diversity in the Health Care Workforce** – To increase diversity in the health care workforce (SB 136)

**Ensuring Funds for Universal Health Care for all** – To establish a trust account with the State Treasurer's office to fund universal health insurance for all Connecticut residents (HB 5543).

**Housing and Economic growth/Rental assistance** – To make state investments to preserve and improve state housing assets and restore the rental assistance program (HB 7149, HB 7126, HB 6642, SB 1129, & H.B. 7006) (Footnotes)

# 2007 Legislative Agenda

## Democracy Issues

### Election Day Registration

*To allow for wider participation from the Latino community in exercising the right to vote*

## Economic Development

### State Earned Income Tax

*To establish a state income tax credit for the working low-wage worker*

## Education Issues

### In-State Tuition for Immigrants

*To provide in-state tuition rates to immigrant students who have attended high schools for at least two years*

### Standardized testing in Spanish

*Amend state law to provide the Connecticut Mastery Test in the students' native language*

### Latino Dropouts and graduation rates

*Decrease the number of Latino students dropping out from school*

## Health Disparity Issues

### HIV/Aids

*Preserve & enhance state investments in health care*

### Access to Health Care

*Preserve & enhance state investments in health care*

## Judicial Issues

### Court Interpreters

*Review funding of interpreters throughout the state*

### Juvenile Justice System

*Decrease over-representation of Latinos in the juvenile justice System*

## Housing Issues

### Homeownership, Affordable Housing & Rental Assistance Programs

*Expand homeownership, affordable housing & rental assistance programs to low & middle-income families*

## Participation, Speaking Engagements & Presentations

**Below is a list of the activities and events in which the LPRAC took an active role in 2007.**

Presentation of LPRAC Legislative Agenda to the Black and Latino Caucus

Dominican Republic flag raising at the Capitol

Advocating for the In-state Tuition Bill

WNPR debate with Senator Dan Debicella on the In-state Tuition Bill

Represented the LPRAC at the African American Affairs Commission Awards Ceremony

National Society of Hispanic MBA's 2007 Destino Award ceremony at the Hartford Club.

LPRAC Tribute to Hispanic Veterans at the LOB

Lead poisoning press conference at the State Capitol

Participated in the Puerto Rican Flag Raising Ceremony at Hartford City Hall

Press conference in support of bill #SB 1484 – the Healthfirst Connecticut and Healthy Kids Initiative

Hosted a meeting with representatives of the Secretary of State to discuss collaborative projects

Participated in an interview with Dr. Estela Lopez for publication in an educational journal

Made presentation to the Hispanic Latino Forum at Central Connecticut State University with Deputy Commissioner of Education George Coleman

Took part in the Peruvian Flag Raising Ceremony at the State Capitol

Participated in the Hispanic Health Council's annual Health Fair

Appeared as a guest on the Secretary of State's television show to discuss Latino civic engagement and voter registration

Participated in the Brazilian Flag Raising at the Capitol

Participated in a statewide (Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford) media tour with the Secretary of State to discuss the importance of the Latino vote in the upcoming elections.

Participated in La Feria de la Familia at the Hartford Civic Center.

## Participation, Speaking Engagements & Presentations (cont.)

Participated in a panel discussion on the importance of affirmative action in education at the Connecticut Association of Affirmative Action Professionals Annual Conference

Participated as a speaker and panel moderator at the 2007 Latino Voting Summit held at Southern Connecticut State University

Made presentation to a group of community activists in Wallingford

Participated as a presenter for the Department of Social Services Hispanic Heritage Month celebration

Participated in the CL&P Social Agency Forum

Participated in a press conference announcing the release of a new study by the Permanent Commission on the status of women

Participated in the H.O.L.A. Town Hall Event at the Hartford Club

Participated as a presenter at the Secretary of State's Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration

Made a presentation on How a Bill Becomes a Law to the Latino Collaborative

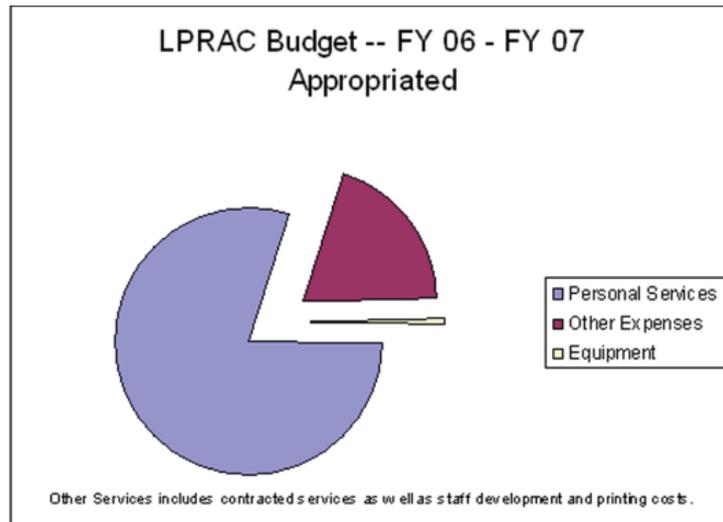
Took part in a press conference with the National Puerto Rican Coalition announcing their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference in Hartford

Presenter at University of Connecticut Latino Conference

Represented the LPRAC at the inaugural meeting of HealthFirst CT Authority whose mission it is to examine the healthcare system in CT and make recommendations for its improvement.

# 2006-2007 Budget

Item	Appropriated
Personnel Services	\$388,220.00
Other Expenses	\$95,526.00
Equipment	\$2,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$486,246.00</b>



\* Other Expenses includes contracted services as well as staff development and printing costs.

LPRAC  
Staff



Fernando Betancourt  
Executive Director

Werner Oyanadel  
Principal Legislative Analyst

Karlo X. Ruiz  
Public Information Officer

Lucy Goicoechea Hernandez  
Special Projects Coordinator &  
Grants Writer

Clarisa Cardone  
Senior Legislative Secretary

*LATINO & PUERTO RICAN AFFAIRS  
COMMISSION  
TOASTMASTERS CLUB*

Invites you to attend the only bilingual communications skills building organization in the state.

The Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Toastmasters Club will help you develop your bilingual communications skills in either English or Spanish through multiple roles, speeches and competitions.

For further information, please call us at:  
**(860) 240-8330.**

## Committees of the Commission

The following committees meet at least quarterly in order to undertake the various assignments that culminate in the accomplishment of the work of the Agency:

### Executive

Article VIII of the By Laws  
This committee meets monthly.

### Budget

Article IX (e) of the By Laws  
This committee meets every month.

### Procedures & Personnel

Article IX (d) of the By Laws  
Meets as related issues arise.

### Public Information, Education & Talent Bank

Article IX (c) of the By Laws  
Meets as related issues arise.

### Priorities & Legislation

Article IX (a) of the By Laws  
Meets on a monthly basis

### Special Projects

Article IX (f) of the By Laws  
Meets on a monthly basis.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

COMMISSION MEETINGS  
ARE HELD EVERY THIRD WEDNES-  
DAY  
OF EACH MONTH AT THE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING,  
ROOM 2600  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT  
6:00 PM -- 8:30 PM

We are always looking to add to our talent bank and we ask that if you are not already listed, please contact our office to find out how your name can be part of our list. This database is helpful in generating candidates to serve on State Boards and Commissions.

### **This report was prepared by:**

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