



Hispanics Playing Key Roles on Obama's Transition Team

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Robert Janis, for HispanicBusiness.com

An analysis of election results shows in no uncertain terms that a major factor in Barack Obama's Presidential victory was the [Hispanic vote](#). Simply put, Obama won 67 percent and McCain garnered 31 percent. Hispanics were an essential part of Obama's wins in New Mexico, Colorado, and Florida.

Now that the election is over and it is time for the President-elect to prepare to govern, Hispanics have to be considered a major element of his new coalition. They can't be ignored -- and as Obama prepared his transition team, he took care not to ignore them.

About 30 Hispanics are currently participating in the team that is preparing the way for Obama to take the reigns of office on January 20, 2009. What follows is a list of the people who are serving on the transition team and short profiles.

Justice And Civil Rights Team

Judge Cruz Reynoso. He was the first Hispanic to serve on the California Supreme Court. Prior to being named to the court, Reynoso was deputy director of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission (CFEPC) and was director of the California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA). After leaving the California Supreme Court, he served on the faculty of the UCLA School of Law and vice chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Tom Perez. Secretary of the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, Perez is responsible for the justice, health and human services, veterans affairs and housing and urban development agencies for the transition team. He has served in the Department of Justice in a number of civil rights positions including Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. He was also director of the office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services and he served as a special counsel to Senator Edward Kennedy. From 2001 to 2007, he served as an assistant professor of law at the University of Maryland Law School.

Alejandro Mayorkas. Mayorkas is an attorney and partner at the law firm of O'Melveny & Myers and represents corporations and businesses in government enforcement and civil cases. Prior to his current position, he served as the United States Attorney for the Central District of California.

Joan Magagna. Magagna has worked for the National Disability Rights Network, a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and advocacy of individuals with disabilities.

Leon Rodriguez. An expert on health care fraud, Rodriguez is the County Attorney for Montgomery County, Maryland. He has served in the U.S. Attorney's office for the Western District of Pennsylvania and as First Assistant U.S. Attorney. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Brown University and a J.D. from Boston College School of Law. He is a member of the Montgomery County and American Bar Associations and is on the Boards of Director of the D.C. Hispanic Bar Association Foundation and the Montgomery County Primary Care Coalition.

Department of Health And Human Services Team

Ray Rivera. Rivera was heavily involved in the Obama campaign as the State Director in Colorado. Prior to the campaign he was a Political Director for AFSCME, a public employees labor union and he served as a union organizer.

Xavier de Souza Briggs. Briggs is an associate professor at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. An expert in affordable housing, economic development and inequality, environmental sustainability and civic engagement and collaboration, he also was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Jonathan D. Moreno. Professor of ethics at the David and Lyn Silfen University and professor of medical ethics and history and sociology of science at the University of Pennsylvania, Moreno is also a visiting professor of biomedical ethics at the University of Virginia. He is also an elected member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies and is a National Associate of the National Research Council, Faculty Affiliate of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and a fellow at the Hastings Center and the New York Academy of Medicine.

Dr. Jose Cordero. A pediatrician and geneticist with close to 30 years of public health experience related to birth defects, developmental disabilities and children's health, Cordero is the Director of the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Center of Disease Control and Prevention.

Energy And Natural Resources Team

Elizabeth Montoya. An expert in human resource management and strategic planning, Montoya advises the Chief Executive officer and Chief Operating officer of Sealaska Corporation in Juneau, Alaska. She has held human resource management positions as associate director of Presidential Personnel in the White House, as deputy chief of staff at the Department of Energy and as associate director of management and administration at the Small Business Administration.

Environmental Protection Agency Review Team

Cecilia V. Estolano. Estolano currently serves as the chief executive officer of the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles and previously she practiced land use and environmental law at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher. She has also served in various city and federal positions including special assistant to the City Attorney in the Los Angeles City Attorney's office, senior policy advisor to the Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and she was a member of the California Coastal Commission.

Corporation For National Service Review Team

Michael Camunez. Experienced in business litigation, corporate investigations and regulatory defense, Camunez is currently a partner in the law firm of O'Melveny & Myers in Los Angeles, California. A leading pro bono attorney, he also served as the senior policy adviser for national service in the Clinton Administration. He also served as the program officer and director of the National Service Demonstration Program at the U.S. Commission on National and Community Service.

Executive office of The President Team

Thomas Soto. An expert in environmental and energy policy and climate change, Soto is co-founder of Craton Equity Partners, a clean technology investment fund based in Southern California. He served as vice chairman of the California State Board of Corrections and the State Coastal Commission. He was also appointed by President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Madelene Albright to the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission. Related to NAFTA, the commission worked to make environmental sustainability a major priority in the implementation of NAFTA. He is also currently a member of the New America Alliance, a leading Latino business group involved in finance.

[Mario Molina.](#) A professor of Physical Chemistry at the University of California in San Diego, Molina was formerly a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He served on the President's Committee of Advisors in Science and Technology from 1994 through 2000. He was honored with a Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1995 for his studies related to the Earth's ozone layer.

Department of Transportation Team

Michael Huerta. Huerta is Group President of ACS Transportation Solution, a company that offers technology solutions for collecting revenue, improving safety and promoting security for the transportation industry. He served in the Department of Transportation in the Clinton Administration as chief of staff and associate deputy secretary. Prior to his stint in the government he was executive director of the Port of San Francisco and Commissioner of the City of New York Department of Ports, International Trade and Commerce.

Victor Mendez. Director of the Arizona Department of Transportation since October 2001, Mendez also served as Deputy Director of the Arizona Department of Transportation and Deputy State Engineer for the Department of Transportation's Valley Transportation Group. He was instrumental in developing a plan for the acceleration of the Regional Freeway System in Maricopa County Arizona. He was also president of the American Association of State Highway officials and the Western Association of State Highway Transportation officials. He is a registered civil engineer and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas in El Paso.

Jeffrey Morales. Morales was Assistant Secretary of Transportation in the Clinton Administration.

Export/Import-OPIC Review Team

George Munoz. An attorney and Certified Public Accountant, Munoz is an expert in international business and finance concerning emerging markets. He was CEO and President of OPIC from 1997 through 2001 and Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial officer of the United States Treasury during the Clinton Administration.

Economics and International Trade Team

Emanuel Pleitez. Currently a financial analyst with Goldman Sachs & Company, Pleitez has also served as special assistant to the Mayor of Los Angeles, California, Antonio Villaraigosa while he was a member of the Los Angeles City Council. He also served as a field organizer for the John Kerry/John Edwards presidential campaign. He had interned for U.S. Senators Tom Dasachle and Hillary Clinton and he has worked for the Quest Scholars Program at Stanford University creating national partnerships with summer programs and school districts that service low income high school students. He also serves now on the Young Professional Advisory Board for voter outreach for Voto Latino. He is a former National Hispanic Heritage Youth Award winner and he serves on the Hispanic Heritage Foundation Business Advisory Committee. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Urban Studies from Stanford University.

Security and Exchange Commission Team

Kenneth I. Trujillo. A founding member of the Trujillo Rodriguez & Richards law firm in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Haddonfield, New Jersey, Trujillo has served as the City Solicitor of Philadelphia and as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. He has served in national and local civic and business groups including the National Council of La Raza and the Congreso de Latinos Unidos, and Health Partners, a managed care organization. He has also participated in city committees and task forces including the City of Philadelphia Police Corruption Task Force, and counsel to Governor Ed Rendell's Transition Team as well as the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority, an entity that oversees the finances of the City of Philadelphia. He has also been President of the Hispanic Bar Association of Pennsylvania and board member of the Hispanic Bar Association of Pennsylvania Legal Education Fund and the Board of Governors of the Hispanic National Bar Association.

Department of Homeland Security Team

Juan Otero. Knowledgeable in the fields of transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, international trade, financial services regulations, science and technology development and affordable housing, Otero serves as director of the Economic Development and Commerce Committee of the National Governors Association. Before joining the National Governors Association, he was deputy director of the SAFECOM Program and assistant deputy director of the office For Interoperability and Compatibility. He also worked as the principal legislative counsel for the National League of Cities in Washington, D.C. From 1996 through 1997 he was a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Fellow for the National League of Cities and the Immigration and Naturalization Service where he was involved in community outreach. He holds a J.D. degree from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, an MPA from American University and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in political science from the City College of New York.

Department of Education Team

Maria Blanco. Maria Blanco is the first Executive Director of the Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at the University of California, Berkeley Law School. She is an attorney with a specialization in employment, immigration and education law. Prior to joining the Warren Institute as its Director she was the Executive Director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the Bay Area. She served as National Senior Counsel with the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund and as director of MALDEF's legislative office in Sacramento, California. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley Law School and received her Bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley. After receiving her Juris Doctorate from Berkeley Law School she was a staff attorney for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit. Ms. Blanco served as an advisor to the Obama campaign in California during the California primary.

[Ed. note: This article originally named an incorrect individual instead of Ms. Blanco. HispanicBusiness.com regrets the error]

Juliet Garcia. Garcia is President of the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College. She is the first Mexican-American to direct a four year U.S. university.

Eugene Garcia. A specialist in bilingual education, Garcia is the Vice President of the Education Partnerships Curriculum and Instruction of the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education at Arizona State University. Prior to joining Arizona State University Garcia was the Dean and Professor of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California in Berkeley. He has also served as a Senior officer and Director of the office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs in the U.S. Department of Education during the Clinton Administration. He is currently the Chairman of the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics and he is doing research in the field of effective schooling for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

As this is being written Bill Richardson, Governor of New Mexico, is seriously being considered for the office of Secretary of Commerce. And, [as we reported last week](#), there is no shortage of other qualified Hispanic candidates for high-level consideration.

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