

**Legislative Coordinating Commission
Ethnic Heritage and New Americans Working Group
Friday, November 21, 2008
Room: 100 Centennial Office Building**

Present:

Rep. Paul Gardner
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Dr. Bruce Corrie
Gloria Contreras-Edin
John Keller
John Poupart

Excused:

Rep. Rod Hamilton
Sen. Joe Gimse
Dr. Peter Sadowski
Joe Swedberg

Rep. Paul Gardner called the meeting of the Ethnic Heritage and New Americans Working Group to order at 2:12 pm.

Overview of New Iowan Centers

Venus Vendoures Walsh, Western Regional Supervisor for the New Iowan Centers, and Marco Adasme, Eastern Regional Supervisor for the New Iowan Centers, reviewed the development of the New Iowan Centers. Ms. Vendoures Walsh gave an overview of the background of the New Iowan Centers noting two pilot sites opened in Sioux City and Muscatine in the year 2000. She then spoke to funding for the New Iowan Centers, which includes funding from the Iowa Legislature and a Demonstration Grant from the Department of Labor. Ms. Vendoures Walsh noted that currently there are twelve New Iowan Centers in Iowa. Ms. Vendoures Walsh and Mr. Adasme stood for questions. Discussion ensued.

Sen. Patricia Torres Ray took over as chair of the meeting. A quorum was present.

Overview of Illinois Office of New Americans

Mireya Hurtado, Deputy Chief of Staff for Illinois Governor; Jose Luis Gutierrez, Director of the Office of New Americans; Grace Hou, Assistant Director of the Illinois Department of Human Services; and Lisa Thakkar, New Americans Policy Project Coordinator for the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights, gave an overview of the development of the Illinois Office of New Americans. Ms. Hurtado explained the process has taken approximately four years and was built upon public-private partnerships.

Ms. Hou reviewed the Seven Guiding Principles developed during year two of the New Americans effort as well as corresponding recommendations developed by the Phase Two New Americans Interagency Task Force. Ms. Hou then gave an overview of the lessons that have been learned and the challenges they have overcome with the New Americans effort. She noted their program had gubernatorial support, legislative support and grassroots support. Ms. Hou also pointed out that their focus was on how to make government more accountable and accessible to

immigrants and refugees. She also noted that one key lesson was the development of private partnerships. Ms. Hurtado, Mr. Gutierrez, Ms. Hou and Ms. Thakkar stood for questions. Discussion ensued.

Next Meeting

Members discussed possible dates for the next meeting. It was decided to meet the morning of Thursday, December 4, 2008.

There being no further business Sen. Torres Ray adjourned the meeting at 4:10 pm