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ABSTRACT

On July 23, 1973, Dr. Henry M. Ramirez, Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People, spoke before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations. Dr. Ramirez outlined why the Cabinet Committee is needed, gave examples of the Committee's accomplishments, and discussed future plans to assure that Federal programs reach the Spanish speaking. According to Dr. Ramirez, the Cabinet Committee was established to advise Federal departments and agencies on appropriate actions to assure that Federal programs reach the Spanish speaking people. Since its establishment in 1969, the Committee has accomplished; the distribution of \$47 million to first time grantees for programs run by the Spanish speaking for the Spanish speaking; the establishment of Project Alpha to deal with job opportunities at the local level and Project Blue at the national level; effective data collection and reporting systems; the improvement of employment opportunities through Project Beta; strengthening the President's 16-point Program by helping to institutionalize it into the Federal structure; and getting agencies to be cognizant of Spanish speaking needs. In the future, the plans are to increase equal educational opportunities and the number of Spanish Americans on the Federal Register through local recruitment. (NQ)

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STATEMENT OF DR. HENRY M. RAMIREZ

CHAIRMAN, CABINET COMMITTEE

ON

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPANISH SPEAKING PEOPLE

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 23, 1973

RC-007368

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Henry Ramirez and I am Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People. Thank you for granting us the opportunity of this hearing. President Nixon nominated me Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on August 5, 1971, and I was confirmed by the Senate in November 1971. The law establishing the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People was passed by the 91st Congress and signed by the President on December 30, 1969.

I come here today to speak on behalf of the only federal mechanism directly serving the nation's 12 million Spanish surnamed Americans. That mechanism is the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People.

For America's second largest but fastest growing minority, the Cabinet Committee offers the Spanish speaking a realistic hope that at long last they will rightfully obtain their equitable share of government funds; and just as importantly, the Spanish speaking will build on the emerging presence of their own people -- Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans and other Hispanics -- in powerful decision and policy making positions in the federal service.

I submit to you that the Cabinet Committee's accomplishments represent progress. We are proud to have helped bring them about. They have resulted in more jobs and funds being delivered to Spanish speaking Americans who need and deserve them.

For by almost every grim statistical measure, the Spanish speaking are at the bottom of the heap. We are poor; we are ill-housed; we are unhealthy; we are undereducated; we are unemployed or underemployed. We are not even accurately counted by the Census Bureau. Many of us have difficulty speaking English, and some of our people, especially our school children, are even discriminated against when they speak their mother tongue. Let's take a closer look at the facts, because they accurately measure the severity of the plight of the Spanish speaking. According to recent figures, the median income for Spanish speaking families was \$7,584 in 1971, almost 30% less than the \$10,285 earned by the general population, and \$10,672 by anglo families.

Less than half of every ten Spanish speaking youths complete high school; the rest dropout. As equally discouraging, less than three percent of Spanish speaking high school graduates finish college; and what is even more discouraging, less than one percent of Spanish speaking college graduates are represented in the professions.

Eighty percent of the Spanish speaking homes in this country are substandard, and in some South Texas counties with predominant Spanish speaking populations, almost 40% of the homes have no indoor plumbing.

Almost ten percent of our people are out of work, and in some areas, more than half of the Spanish speaking holding jobs earn less than the poverty level.

The incidence of tuberculosis and other serious illnesses is higher among the Spanish speaking than any other racial or ethnic group.

The litany of despair for the Spanish speaking goes on and on; and adding to our deep frustration is the sad fact that, except for the 16-Point program and the Bilingual Education Act, the nation's civil rights laws and executive orders have not worked for us. For decade after decade we were either ignored or forgotten by our government, by both major political parties, by the dominant anglo society. Federal programs, funds and jobs were just not reaching our people. In short, we did not count; we were an invisible minority.

And that, I submit to you, is why the Cabinet Committee was established for the Spanish speaking. A vehicle is needed to assure that federal programs are in fact reaching the Spanish surnamed -- a unique American people who have proudly retained their own language and culture.

The law establishing the Cabinet Committee was passed by the 91st Congress and signed by the President on December 30, 1969.

In general, the Cabinet Committee's function is to advise federal departments and agencies regarding appropriate action to be taken to help assure that federal programs are providing the assistance needed by Spanish speaking and Spanish surnamed Americans. This mission includes advising federal departments

and agencies on the development of comprehensive coordinated policies, plans and programs which focus on the special problems and needs of Spanish speaking and Spanish surnamed Americans. What the Cabinet Committee intends to ultimately accomplish is to institutionalize programs, policies and mechanisms throughout the entire federal structure so that inclusion of the Spanish speaking becomes an automatic function of government. By inclusion, we mean bread and butter for the Spanish speaking -- recruitment, placement, promotion, contract compliance, procurement, and their right to acquire and receive an equitable share of government funds.

That goal, Mr. Chairman, may appear ambitious for a lean federal agency whose annual budget of \$900,000 is expected to meet the pressing needs of 12 million Spanish speaking people.

But I assure you that despite our financial restraints, the Cabinet Committee has been and is continuing to be effective. Let's briefly review the record, because the accomplishments are both positive and unprecedented.

In the crucial area of funding, I would cite a Cabinet Committee project, called Alpha, which resulted in the distribution of \$47 million to first time grantees for programs run by the Spanish speaking for the Spanish speaking.

I'm referring to the Spanish speaking Unity Council of Oakland, California, an affiliate of the National Council of La Raza, which received \$22,200 to provide stipends to Spanish speaking

college students from the University of California at Berkeley to serve as counselors to Spanish speaking high school dropouts. I'm referring, too, to the South Bronx Offender Rehabilitation Program in New York which received \$125,000 to support community-based rehabilitation programs for ex-inmates to reduce their rate of relapse.

And, also to the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory, Inc., of New Mexico which received \$265,000 for a bilingual/bicultural educational and vocational program for Spanish speaking youth.

I am also referring to SABER of Miami, Florida, which received \$106,400 to develop a bilingual training and outreach program to place Spanish speaking persons in gainful jobs in the Miami area.

And, too, the Latin American Task Force in Chicago which received \$68,000 for a project designed to assist Spanish speaking contractors in obtaining contracts, which in turn provides employment and training opportunities to the Spanish speaking in construction occupations.

There is also the Colorado Pinto Program at Boulder, Colorado which received \$333,664 to rehabilitate ex-offenders.

Then there is the American GI Forum Community Service Center in Dallas, Texas which received \$60,000; Operation SER's Vietnam Veterans Outreach program in Los Angeles which received \$50,000; and the LULAC education program in Corpus Christi, Texas which received \$226,100.

The Cabinet Committee directly saw to it that these Spanish speaking groups, and similar Spanish speaking organizations in the six most heavily populated areas of the country received their first-time allocations. And bear in mind, that these \$47 million were in addition to funds previously approved for delivery of programs and services to the Spanish speaking through the normal channels of the agencies involved.

That, I submit to you, is effectiveness.

Two other long-range activities were launched by the Cabinet Committee to open up the vital funding and employment areas for the Spanish speaking. They are Projects Blue and Beta. Project Alpha dealt with opportunities at the local level. Project Blue, in turn, dealt with opportunities at the national level. The Cabinet Committee staff went to member agencies to monitor the status and progress of civil rights efforts. Each agency was asked to establish goals and timetables which would bring out equitable Spanish speaking participation in employment, program deliveries, procurement and contract compliance. Project Blue's guidelines called for each member agency to report to the Chairman its plan for assuring that the Spanish speaking receive jobs and program funding on the basis of parity. Project Blue has not yet been materially realized. Project Blue did bring about the counting of the Spanish speaking as a separate minority. It also sensitized mid-level management, making these individuals aware that they must provide opportunities for the

Spanish speaking people. The process of collecting pertinent data and formulating a national perspective of disparities and benefits is not a short-term undertaking. The Committee has and will continue to bring about effective data collection and reporting systems.

Project Beta's principal objective is to improve employment opportunities. The passage of HR-1 and the establishment of the new Bureau of Supplemental Security Income provided the Cabinet Committee staff the opportunity of increasing the employment of Spanish speaking Americans with SSA. The staff developed a coordinated plan with the Civil Service Commission and HEW to assist in the recruiting of Spanish speaking Americans to fill some of the 35,000 new positions created by HR-1.

Project Beta was discussed and endorsed by the Chairman and the Acting Commissioner of SSA. Meetings were also held by staffs of member agencies to analyze Project Beta and to work out implementation of this plan.

That, I submit to you, is effectiveness.

In the area of employment, the Cabinet Committee has moved to strengthen the President's 16-Point Program to assure that federal jobs across the board are reaching the Spanish speaking.

As of January 23 of this year the 16-Point Program became a part of the Federal Personnel Manual System. This regulation requires every agency to implement the program and to assign coordinators. There are now sixty-four full or part-time

Sixteen Point Program Coordinators in government agencies to see that the agencies recruit and place Spanish speaking in jobs within the full General Schedule grade-level.

And what have been the results of the 16-Point Program?

I think it is highly significant that while full-time government employment has been reduced by almost 60,000 during the last four years, Spanish speaking employment in the federal service has actually increased. During that time, nearly 4,000 Spanish speaking persons were added to the federal workforce, bringing their total number to more than 76,000.

In the better paying General Schedule jobs, full-time employment of the Spanish speaking represented 12.4 percent of the total federal increase during this same four year period.

At the top of the job ladder, the Spanish speaking are being placed for the first time in high-level, policy-making jobs to the point where now more than 40 Spanish surnamed persons hold such positions. In the past few days four more Spanish speaking individuals were named to supergrade positions. They are Victor Rivera, director of the Small Business Administration's District Office in New York City; Sam Martinez, regional director of Department of Labor's Denver region; Edward Hidalgo, general counsel of the United States Information Agency; and Alberto Trevino, general manager of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's New Communities Development Corporation.

The 16-Point Program is in fact helping the Spanish speaking to get more jobs across the board, and it is being institutionalized every day into the federal structure.

That, I submit to you, is effectiveness.

And that is not all.

By working closely with the member agencies of the Cabinet Committee, the Committee staff has been able to sensitize the agencies to be cognizant of the needs of the Spanish speaking.

A notable example is the cooperation between the Cabinet Committee staff and the Small Business Administration. In fiscal year 1972, SBA business loan approvals to Spanish speaking people increased in number from 2,570 to 3,158 and in dollars from \$57.8 million to \$74.5 million over the previous year. Under its procurement program, SBA awarded 248 government contracts to Spanish speaking firms for nearly \$18 million, and under its 406 grant program, which provides management and technical resources, Spanish speaking firms received \$547,000 of the \$3 million allotment to the program.

That cooperation, I submit to you, is effectiveness.

Let me assure you, however that these gains are being observed as beginnings for the Spanish speaking -- not as ends.

For this reason, we must build on our record in our 1974 fiscal year projections.

The Cabinet Committee staff will continue to monitor the 16-Point Program, making sure that all of the agencies have Sixteen Point Program Coordinators and that the Spanish speaking enjoy equal opportunity in government.

The Cabinet Committee staff is preparing plans to increase the number of Spanish speaking Americans on the Federal Register through recruiting activities at the local level. The Cabinet Committee staff is also preparing plans to increase the number of students in cooperative education programs and summer intern programs.

Increasing equal educational opportunities has always been a prime concern of the Cabinet Committee. The staff is designing a plan recommending that appropriate member agencies make a complete assessment of the federal government's activities toward the implementation of bilingual/bicultural education.

In keeping with this prime concern, the staff has also prepared a proposal for a comprehensive study on the dropout problem as it relates to the Spanish speaking and will prepare a plan for the establishment of national scholarship funds for the higher education of Spanish speaking individuals.

The Cabinet Committee staff is pursuing a number of approaches to economic development opportunities. The Committee will seek to establish ten Minority Enterprise Small Business Investment Corporations and an as yet undetermined number of Business Development Organizations and Business Resource Centers. The

Cabinet Committee staff is also preparing plans to increase the number of 8(a) Spanish speaking companies to reflect geographic distribution and a wider business base and to increase the number of 8(a) contracts negotiated by these companies from the present level of 19 percent.

One of the major difficulties encountered by the Cabinet Committee in carrying out its work is the lack of comprehensive beneficiary data to help assess the participation of Spanish speaking in government programs. The Cabinet Committee staff is seeking to improve data collection procedure by recommending the establishment of an interagency Federal Racial Ethnic Data System and continued coordination with the Bureau of the Census.

As a result of inquiries from the Cabinet Committee, the Bureau of the Census has improved its methods for accurately counting the Spanish speaking and Spanish surnamed. We know we always have been undercounted, and as a result, we have been short-changed on government funding, because public funds are most often allocated to the communities on the basis of census figures. What we are pushing for is an accurate population count of the Spanish speaking, and we will continue to advise the Census Bureau on the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated policies, plans, and programs for the next Census survey.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, I have outlined why the Cabinet Committee is needed, some examples of the Committee's accomplishments for the Spanish speaking, and what the Committee intends to do now to assure that federal programs are reaching the Spanish speaking.

The Cabinet Committee's task is as enormous as it is challenging. We think we have been effective, but the needs of the Spanish speaking are so great that our task is not anywhere near completed. But of some things I am certain. The Cabinet Committee has accomplished some viable beginnings which must be accelerated if the Spanish speaking are to become an integral part of our nation.

For the Cabinet Committee, and the Spanish speaking stand today at the crossroads. The choices are clear:

Will the Cabinet Committee continue, or will it die? Will America's 12 million Spanish speaking people continue to have a meaningful voice at the federal level, or will they again be forgotten?

It is my firm conviction that if the Cabinet Committee dies, it will never be resurrected, thus further frustrating the hopes of the Spanish speaking to reach the threshold of life so they can compete on an equal footing with their fellow Americans.

To authorize, or not to authorize -- that is your decision.

On behalf of the nation's Spanish speaking, we hope and pray
that your deliberations are fair, that your decision is just.

I thank you.....