



**Hispanic Council on Federal Employment  
Twenty-Forth Public Meeting  
October 22, 2015**

On October 22, 2015, the Hispanic Council on Federal Employment (HCFE) held its twenty-fourth public meeting at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in Washington, D.C. Participants included:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title and Organization</b>
Junish Arora (alternate for Nimesh Patel)	Senior Program Manager, Diversity & Inclusion, Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
Cristina Bartolomei (alternate for Kimberly Castillo)	National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers (NCHEPM)
Sara Clemente (alternate for Brent Wilkes)	Director of Federal Affairs, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Beth F. Cobert	Acting OPM Director and Co-Chair
Georgia Coffey	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Alicia Diaz	Executive Director of Legislative Affairs, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
Roberto Falkenstein (alternate for Veronica Vasquez)	Region III Director, National Image, Inc. (Image)
Al Gallegos	President, National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives (NAHFE)
Frank Lopez	Association of Latino Professionals For America (ALPFA)
Jacqueline Padron (alternate for Zina Sutch)	Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager, Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/Life Division, Office of Human Resources Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Gilbert Sandate	Chair, Coalition for Fairness for Hispanics in Government
Mike Sena (alternate for CJ Johnson)	Deputy Director, Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity, Office of the Under Secretary/Personnel & Readiness, Department of Defense (DoD)

Name	Title and Organization
Dan Solis (via teleconference)	CEO, President, National Organization for Mexican American Rights, Inc. (NOMAR, Inc.)
Veronica Vasquez (via teleconference)	Vice President, Image

The following OPM employees participated in the meeting: Beth F. Cobert, Acting OPM Director; Gonzales Gonzales, Deputy Chief of Staff; Loida Tapia, Director, Advance and Scheduling; Veronica Villalobos, Principal Deputy Associate Director, Employee Services and Executive Director, HCFE; Sharon M. Wong, Acting Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

**Welcome, Introductions, and Opening Remarks** (start time: 2:00 PM)

*Beth F. Cobert, Acting OPM Director and Co-Chair*

- Acting Director Cobert thanked the council for their participation in Hispanic heritage month. At OPM, Adelante, an OPM employee resource group (ERG), organized an event with Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Deputy Director of Public Engagement, White House. Mr. Sergio Gonzales was part of a panel of senior leaders during the month’s recognition. Adelante sponsored events at the OPM Theodore Roosevelt Building and in a field office in Boyers, Pennsylvania. Ms. Villalobos was involved in Hispanic heritage month events at the Departments of Justice, Interior, and the Navy, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Gonzales represented OPM at an event at the Department of Transportation.
- Acting Director Cobert said that there has been some improvement in Hispanic representation in fiscal year (FY) 2014 data. She said the focus should be on how to transport good practices from one agency to others. There is a focus at OPM to bring Hispanics into senior leadership role, and progress has been made. There has also been better retention than in previous years.

**Roll Out of the Government-wide Hispanic Employment Report Overview**

*Sharon M. Wong, Acting Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, OPM*

- OPM hopes to release the Hispanic employment report online by the end of the day or the following morning, but Ms. Wong showed charts directly from the Hispanic report. She provided the distribution of permanent federal employees as of September 30, 2014, which indicated that Hispanics represented 8.4 percent of the federal workforce. OPM reports on permanent Hispanic employees only; Ms. Wong showed Hispanic representation in the permanent federal civilian workforce in FY 2000 to 2014.
- Hispanic representation by agencies is also included in the report. The report indicated that the 24 largest agencies increased or stayed the same, 19 had an increase in terms of the on board percentage of Hispanics. Examples of large agencies included DOD and the Department of Health and Human Services. Acting Director Cobert said the data in the reports relates mostly to chief financial officer agencies.
- LULAC asked why numbers for specific agencies were not included. Ms. Wong said they are included within the larger public report that would be release later in the day.
- Ms. Wong also showed the Hispanic permanent on-board workforce by pay system, the percentage increased from 4.1 in FY 2013 to 4.4 in FY 2014.

- Additionally, Ms. Wong provided the percentage of the permanent federal civilian workforce that is Hispanic by state. States with the highest percentages included: New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, California, and Florida.
- OPM will conduct a state by state analysis, looking at the relevant civilian labor force (RCLF) and where agencies are currently hiring, 80-85 percent of federal employees are in the field across the 50 states. Ms. Wong invited participants to think about policies and strategies OPM could develop to help in its work in conducting analysis to identify barriers.
- Ms. Wong showed FY 2014 Hispanic representation among permanent new hires by pay system. There was an increase from 3.5 percent to 5.5 percent from FY 2013 to FY 2014 in terms of senior executive services (SES) permanent new hires. Overall, new hires went from 7 to 7.5 percent. The Department of Homeland Security, Social Security Administration (SSA), Department of Labor, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) represented 55 percent of all Hispanic permanent new hires. If the Departments of Justice and Defense are included, they account for 75 percent of Hispanic new hires.
- Ms. Wong provided data on FY 2014 Hispanic hiring into professional and administrative occupations, the total increased from 4.4 to 5.7 from FY 2013 to FY 2014.
- Ms. Wong also showed FY 2014 Hispanic hiring into the top professional occupations. The largest number, 430, but also the highest percentage, of Hispanic new hires was in the auditing occupation. That related to the Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA). DOD will share information on what they did to increase numbers. The top occupations were followed by electrical engineering, medical technologists, and the accounting occupation.
- Ms. Wong provided data on FY 2014 Hispanic hiring into top 20 administrative occupations; the largest number was in SSA.
- Additionally, Ms. Wong showed FY 2014 Hispanic separations among the permanent federal civilian workforce, separations can occur through transferring to another agency, resignations, and retirements. Ms. Wong showed FY 2014 separations as percentages of the on-board workforce by race or national origin, Hispanic retirement level was lower than the government-wide level.
- HACU asked if the data includes Puerto Rico. Ms. Villalobos said yes. Ms. Villalobos also said that the way OPM collects data from Puerto Rico is different, as Puerto Rico, does not collect ethnicity, related to the civilian labor force.
- The Coalition for Fairness for Hispanics in Government said that once the report is issued, it is not uncommon to be contacted by media; the representative asked if there have been Hispanic improvements, or top lines they could discuss. Ms. Wong said that the SES numbers has the largest increase, from 2.5 to 5.5. The HCFE took the SES Hispanic representation as an issue over the last year, and improvements are evident.
- Ms. Villalobos said that in terms of the on-board permanent workforce, 21 posted gains and 4 stayed the same, of the 25 agencies.
- HACU asked if there were significant movements within these agencies, Ms. Villalobos said that there were some increases. If an agency was doing more hiring, they made more diverse hiring. Ms. Wong said that in terms of new hires in large agencies, NASA went from 8.7 percent to 11.5 percent. Ms. Villalobos said that when looking at other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics agencies, NASA outperforms the expectation in terms of the RCLF.

- NOMAR asked what agencies did best in terms of the SES. Ms. Wong said she would get back to NOMAR. Acting Director Cobert said that there is a small total number of SES members. The SES positions created each year are quite variable.
- HACU said that there has been discussion about the State Department Foreign Service data in the past, and they do not submit their data because of the way it was being requested. HACU said that in the last report, next to the State Department, there was an asterisk saying Foreign Service data was not submitted. HACU asked about that. Ms. Villalobos said that it is not about how OPM asks for data. It is about what OPM is allowed to ask from the State Department, OPM cannot post some numbers. OPM reports it how OPM is permitted to report it based on the authority.
- ALPFA said that the numbers went from 8.3 to 8.4 overall. ALPFA asked if there are any specific initiatives, rather than marketplace and demands of agencies, any lessons learned to help agencies increase Hispanic hiring. Ms. Wong said they would hear from agencies that had shown success. Ms. Villalobos would also discuss what agencies have done.

### **Discussion of Agency Practices on Latino Hiring**

*Veronica Villalobos, Principal Deputy Associate Director for Employee Services, OPM  
Invited agencies*

- Ms. Villalobos said SSA did little hiring in 2013 but historically, they have done really well. Ms. Villalobos said that Mr. Reginald Wells said they have to constantly outreach and recruit. Ms. Villalobos said that the Council would hear from NASA. Last year, they were at 8.7 percent and they went up to 11.5 percent in terms of Hispanic hires. Ms. Villalobos said that the Council would hear from DCAA about their incredible postings.
- Sara Alvarez, with SSA, spoke about success regarding Hispanic hiring. There are 60,000 SSA employees in 1,400 field offices and headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. SSA is committed to recruiting diverse candidates. SSA fosters a culture that values equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. 5 year statistics show an upward trend from 13.6 percent at the end of FY 2009 to 15.1 percent by the end of FY 2014. Hispanic hires have increased within SSA from 5.3 to 13.3 percent.
- Ms. Alvarez discussed recruitment and outreach strategies; SSA attends and conducts workshops, participates in nationwide career and job fairs, .e.g., LatPro, regularly outreaches to Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs), attends career fairs, reviews resumes, provides professional development, advertises job openings, and establishes relationships with affinity groups, e.g., the Colorado Bar Association. Additionally, SSA provides information in Spanish in newsletters. SSA also volunteers at Hispanic events including having employees participated in local Hispanic achievement award ceremonies celebrating high school graduates. Furthermore, SSA conducted a backpack to briefcase workshop at universities. They focused workshops on entry level positions and navigating USAJOBS. SSA said that posting job announcements on USAJOBS for bilingual positions and using the veterans' recruitment hiring authority are critical to their efforts.
- SSA also focuses on retention; they conduct workshops on job enrichment and career development. Headquarters has seminars on a form for applications and how to write it specific to particular jobs. Through realignment and cross-training, SSA makes opportunities available, including through cross-component job-sharing activities. SSA has leadership training programs to prepare people to become leaders, including a leadership development

program for 18 months for employees at the GS 9-12 levels. There is an advanced leadership program for 18 months for employees at the GS 13-14 levels, and there is also an SES candidate development program. There are career enrichment workshops for employees at the GS-12 levels and below. Regional offices and headquarters have their own leadership development programs specific to their regions, the Learn, Experience, Aspire, and Develop (LEAD) Program for Office of Human Resources employees is very popular. Components target leadership for their regions. SSA has a collaborative relationship with their Hispanic advisory council on development and recruitment efforts. The SSA Diversity and Inclusion Council focuses on recruitment, inclusion, and sustainability.

- The representative for the Coalition for Fairness for Hispanics in Government said that he thought that the bilingual/bicultural authority was eliminated by an OPM director. Ms. Villalobos said that an agency may have a bilingual requirement as part of the job opportunity announcement (JOA), but cannot bring people on under that one authority. OPM encourages agencies to use that tool when there is a requirement for that in the JOA. Ms. Alvarez said that maybe the term is different from what it used to be, SSA has jobs where it needs bilingual employees, including Spanish speaking employees, so SSA can recruit using this tool. Ms. Villalobos said that OPM can do better at letting agencies know that they can include language requirements for agencies that need bilingual employees. A participant asked SSA to send list of practices. SSA agreed to do that.
- ALPFA said that if there is a presentation on data, it would be helpful to have that for people on the phone before the presentation. Ms. Villalobos said the data is part of the report, which was being made 508 compliant.
- NAHFE said that the SSA program sounds great. Also, NAHFE mentioned the lifecycle approach to diversity involving recruitment, hiring, retention, and succession. NAHFE asked Ms. Alvarez to provide an idea of the written policies in terms of implementation, enforcement, and budget. Ms. Alvarez said that SSA had record hiring data and activities they engage in. Ms. Villalobos said SSA is one of the most thoughtful, strategic planners.
- NOMAR asked how people are selected for development programs; Ms. Alvarez said that leadership development programs are something people apply for. Applicants demonstrate their current skills, examples of what they have done, what their strengths are, and etc. They are interviewed, similar to the SES candidate development program selection process.
- Mr. Sena presented on DCAA data and improvements in recruitment and hiring of Hispanics. DCAA increased overall employment of Hispanics through strategic initiatives in 2012 to 2015, representation went from 7.79 to 15.88 percent. It started through DCAA's recruitment strategies. The Hispanic Employment Program Committee was created and chaired by the Hispanic employment program manager. It has evolved and has become an ERG. The focus was recruitment, retention, and career advancement in the department. Through workforce and barrier analysis, they focused on DCAA's mission critical occupations. Some of the outreach strategies involved HACU outreach to recruit Hispanics into entry level auditor positions within the agency. They recruited throughout the US, with targeted events in locations including California, Texas, and Puerto Rico. They partnered with DOD, which employs a Student Training and Academic Recruitment (STAR) Program student at a university in Puerto Rico. They talk to prospective candidates and provide information about DOD employment. They share information with prospective applicants on how to navigate USAJOBS and inform people about opportunities. Through their outreach, DCAA provided specific information about the agency and federal employment, including information

sessions on how to write a good resume and how to navigate USAJOBS. In the 2014 strategic plan, one proactive objective was to increase Hispanic rates agency-wide and increase new hires of Hispanics. They did this through recruitment at HSIs and reaching out to professional organizations. They partnered with DOD agencies to participate at career fairs for Hispanic college students, including at the University of Texas at San Antonio. They did targeted recruiting.

- The Coalition for Fairness for Hispanics in Government asked about the numbers behind the percentage increase. He said there was an astounding increase by DCAA. He asked if DCAA had direct hire authority. Mr. Sena said they do have direct hire authority but this was not the reason behind the numbers. Mr. Sena also said that he would provide the numbers to Ms. Wong to provide to the group.
- Mr. Gonzales raised a question about the geography of the new hires. In highly populated states, there is higher representation of Hispanics in the Federal Government. Mr. Sena said he did not have specific locations of DCAA at the meeting. They made a conscientious decision to go to California, Texas, and other areas with high populations of Hispanic people to conduct outreach. Ms. Villalobos said that ERGs, when partnering with agencies, are making a positive influence and DCAA was a prime example of this.
- Ms. Tenisha James, with the Department of Education, would like to see Hispanic data for all authorities by agency. She raised a question about how many new hires are from the Pathways Program, veterans, and the delegated examining unit. They do a lot of outreach, but cannot offer the jobs because candidates cannot make it through the process.
- Acting Director Cobert said that SSA uses the general service competitive hiring process and still sees results. SSA looks at what they can do for people with and without direct hiring authorities and they are showing results.
- The VA said that 66 percent Hispanics in new hires is astonishing. Direct hiring authority is a tool, but they cannot see it based on protected categories.
- LULAC said that the issue is where an agency goes to recruit. If an agency goes to Puerto Rico, Texas, and California, it will find Hispanics.
- Ms. Sharon Wagner presented on NASAs data. She said that the main point is that even though results may jump in a year, the results are from many years of a sustained effort. NASA has an agency Hispanic employment program manager (HEPM) and HEPMs at each of their 11 field centers and headquarters. NASA utilizes the Pathways Program and summer education internships, grants to HSIs, targeted outreach and recruitment at HSIs, and national conferences and career fairs. For example, in FY 2014, NASA offered over \$32,000 dollars in scholarships. NASA also participated as a judge in a college bowl. NASA nominated national employees for awards in FY 2014, as well. NASA has been involved in those activities year after year. That is what makes a difference. NASA has seen a payoff in 2013 to 2014 based on field participation in a variety of events and outreach.
- Ms. Wagner said that Hispanic advisory groups and ERGs are critical to recruitment and retention of Hispanic employees. The major pipeline for NASA is the Pathways Program and summer internships. Hispanic ERGs provide a network and mentoring for those students.
- NASA has been found to be the best place to work for 2 to 3 years in a row for the large agencies. NASA is not satisfied with that. NASA wants to continue to do better. NASA wants to be the best place to work for everyone. NASA has diversity and inclusion training at different centers with high participation.

- Ms. Villalobos said that in hearing from these agencies, participants see certain themes. OPM will create a matrix to show where there are commonalities. OPM will share that with the HCFE and the larger diversity and inclusion and civil rights communities.
- NOMAR said that most agencies do not have HEPMs.
- NCHEPM said that a major takeaway is the importance of HEPMs in agencies. Some agencies have HEPMs fulltime, but many do not dedicate personnel for this, and some are collateral duty. NCHEPM is available to help agencies have strong HEPM programs.
- LULAC said that in the past, agencies were required to have an HEPM. LULAC said that there was always a general listing of all HEPMs. Some were collateral duty, but assigned specific percentages of time to do this work. A lot of agencies do not have HEPMs. Agencies do not offer people the opportunity to do the job, once they are assigned as HEPMs. LULAC asked what they will do with agencies that do not have HEPMs. Ms. Villalobos said that it is in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regulations. A problem is that their position descriptions look different across the agencies. They must flesh out those jobs.
- Image said that some agencies rely more on ERGs than HEPMs to do their jobs. Image said that ERGs do not have the resources that a HEPM would have in the agency. More and more agencies do not have HEPMs, because an agency has an ERG, which limits the agency's responsibility to have an HEPM. Ms. Wagner said that they are issuing guidance on ERGs saying that an ERG chair does not take the place of a special emphasis program manager. They each have different important roles.
- USDA gives millions of dollars to HSIs. Also, USDA has ERGs and HEPMs. The most important reason why Hispanic representation in the SES went from 4.4 percent to over 7 percent is because they have Secretary Vilsack as a strong supporter and advocate. He gets milestones and metrics every month on representations. Very high leadership commitment to these programs is important.
- Ms. Villalobos said that she would love to have the same people at the next meeting to discuss council goals for this fiscal year.

### **Discussion on Council Goals**

*Sergio Gonzales, Deputy Chief of Staff, OPM*

- Mr. Gonzales laid out what they talked about doing during the previous year, and milestones they met. Participants had a discussion based on what they knew looking at the numbers and discussions with agencies and successful practices across government.
- Last year, they said to focus on recruitment and identifying job opportunities and partnering with the HCFE to disseminate those. OPM was very aggressive about getting into the field and building relationships with HSIs. OPM found relationships it had with HSIs were not formalized. OPM did not have good points of contact. Many places did not understand the federal hiring process. Counselors were not prepared to talk with students about opportunities with the Federal Government. The OPM recruitment and public engagement offices spent a lot of time building relationships, including with college counselors.
- OPM also continued partnerships with agencies looking to expand recruitment in Hispanic communities. OPM partnered with the Federal Aviation Administration regarding hiring air traffic controllers. They saw dramatic hiring of Hispanic air traffic controllers. They were aggressive in recruiting Hispanic applicants. OPM worked with the HCFE on those announcements. OPM is partnering with the National Park Service to conduct a deep data

analysis of their applicant flow data and hiring process and figuring out ways to recruit for those positions.

- The SES numbers are a success. The Hispanic permanent new hires in the SES increased from 3.5 percent in FY 2013 to 5.5 percent in FY 2014. They would like to build on that over the next year. Part of that is driven by agency commitment. Accountability matters. Secretary Vilsack has been leading the charge. Part of that involves work with agencies to develop leaders. LULAC has done an incredible job with their program. OPM wants to build on this success.
- LULAC said that it has programs open to all federal employees, not just Latinos. At the last Federal Training Institute, they were competing with the Pope, but they were still successful. They did not have as many Latinos in that training as they hoped for. LULAC sent information to agencies, HEPMs, and HCFE members. LULAC also provided the information on their website. A lot of employees said agencies still did not allow them to attend because they were not in leadership positions. LULAC is trying to create a pipeline for these leadership positions. The biggest concern relates to where the commitment is of agencies that say they want to develop leaders but do not let employees attend free events. LULAC mentioned collaboration with the VA, USDA, State Department, and others. Ms. Villalobos made a commitment to talk to the Chief Human Capital Officers Council about this. LULAC said they will host LULAC Conference in D.C. She is working with Brent Wilkes to get interns and HEPMs to attend. LULAC plans to work with agencies in assisting them with their challenges on diversity issues.
- Mr. Gonzales said that agencies that have done this well have tackled all factors involved in strategic recruitment, hiring authorities, training for managers and employees, working with ERGs, and accountability coming from the top. To be successful, they must tackle all of these areas.
- HCFE members need to consider what they can focus on in the next year.
- NAHFE said that one item they miss sometimes is that if they put too much weight on, i.e., recruiting and HSIs and do not put weight on people in middle management to get to SES, by the time people at the GS-5, 7, 9, and 11 levels have time to become SES members, all of those positions are already taken by non-Hispanics.
- Acting Director Cobert said that one really important item for them to think about and come back to in the HCFE next time relates to thinking about what the items are where HCFE involvement will make a difference. She raised a question about what the pieces are that the HCFE can do best.
- Acting Director Cobert expressed appreciation for the presenter agencies' modesty about their accomplishments and that they do not believe they are finished. They just finished the first step in an ongoing process. Acting Director Cobert looks forward to discussing how to best focus efforts of this group to drive impact.
- Image would like to look into why, when it comes to Latinos attending conference training, there is no money for career goals. There seems to be money and support for other groups. Ms. Villalobos said to take that conversation offline. OPM has worked closely with organizations to build those agendas to where Chief Learning Officers and agencies are on board. Ms. Villalobos suggested working on those agendas together. Ms. Wong will reach out to set that up.

## **Closing Remarks, Public Comments, and Adjournment**

- Mr. Frank Lopez said the data shows for the last year, they have made slight increases of a decimal point. It is important to acknowledge that while people in the not-for-profit world will stretch resources, it is unfair that they must find freebies for federal employees because there is no other way to accommodate their attendance. Dollars do mean something. Mr. Lopez said that they need to find a way to maintain transparency. If an agency does not have an HEPM, the list of HEPMs should be published.
- Ms. Villalobos said to think about and study in the report that they are talking about a federal workforce of over 2 million people.
- Ms. Villalobos adjourned the meeting at 3:36 PM.

## **Certification**



Veronica Villalobos  
Executive Director,  
Hispanic Council on Federal Employment