



Pete Ricketts  
*Governor*

## STATE OF NEBRASKA

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### COMMISSIONERS GISELLA MUÑOZ AND JOSE SANTOS TO RETIRE

LINCOLN – Commissioners Gisella Muñoz of Bellevue and Jose Santos of Gretna have retired from the Nebraska Latino American Commission (NLAC) Board of Commissioners.

When Santos retired as Labor Law Investigator and Nebraska Meatpacking Bill of Rights Coordinator with the Dept. of Labor in January 2015, he had also retired as the Governor’s Representative from the NLAC Board of Commissioners. Santos had served as the Governor’s Representative since June 2000 when he was appointed by then-Governor Mike Johanns.

“The Commission is an entity that, in my opinion, has to be in place because it’s the only source the Hispanic population has to communicate with the government,” he said.

In 1950, when Santos was eight-years-old, he and his family moved from Bayamón, Puerto Rico to New York City at the urging of family members who told his father that his children would have better education and work opportunities in the mainland.

On Jan. 3, 1963, Santos received his military draft notice but was not sent overseas for active combat in Vietnam, instead, he was sent to Nebraska where as a member of the U.S. Air Force he worked at Strategic Air Command in Omaha. Santos worked communications with intercontinental ballistic missiles, a position he would have for the next 22 years.

In 1985, his military career ended and he was seeking his bachelor’s in Business Administration at the University of Nebraska – Omaha (UNO). While attending under the American GI Bill, he was working at the university’s military affairs and job services when he learned of a new position at the Nebraska Dept. of Labor. Santos was offered the position due to his background and bilingual skills, and he decided to take the position of Labor Law Investigator when he was just one course shy of completing his degree requirements.

He explained that in 2000, a task force was created to visit meat-packing plants for observation. Santos was part of the task force and assisted in interpretation.



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“We still have a long way to go,” said Santos. “This meat-packing industry is dangerous.”

Santos and the task force helped draw up the Bills of Rights for meat-packing plant workers for the state, and the title of Meatpacking Bills of Rights Coordinator was added to his job title.

Santos retired after 22 years with the Dept. of Labor. His replacement is Deyanira Salgado, who is the new Labor Law Investigator and Nebraska Meatpacking Bill or Rights Coordinator. As the Governor’s Representative, Santos did not have term limits required of appointed Commissioners making him the longest serving Commissioner with NLAC. As a result, he has a piece of advice for future Commissioners.

“As soon as they become a Commissioner they need to, as soon as possible, learn how the system works, and how they fit into that system to provide for their community,” he said.

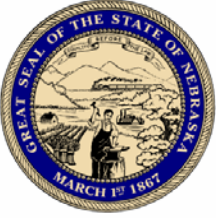
Santos resides in Gretna with his wife Alma, and frequently babysits his grandchildren Gabriela and Christian José. He volunteers at his local church, St. Patrick Catholic Church, and with the Knights of Columbus. He continues to serve as an advisor for NLAC and the Dept. of Labor.

Muñoz was appointed in 2009 by then-Governor Dave Heineman, and represented Bellevue and the Omaha metro area.

“For me, it was an honor to have served for all these years and to have helped members in our community,” said Muñoz. “In the Commission I have learned that Latinos in the Midwest are in need of orientation and support. The Commission does a great job of informing, educating, assisting, advocating and functioning as a resource for the Latino community. I am happy that I have been part of this Commission for six years. I will continue working to help the Latino community in the legal field.”

Muñoz is originally from Lima, Peru and attended the University de San Martin de Porres, a private university in Lima. She received her bachelor’s degree in Law and Political Science in 1995 and her Juris Doctor from the university’s law school in 1996. After graduation, she worked as a legal assistant at PetroPeru and shortly thereafter as a manager and tax auditor at ESSALUD Social Security.

She immigrated to Omaha in September 1999 and has worked in different settings including customer service, human resources and as an admissions counselor at Bellevue University. In 2007, she graduated from Bellevue University with a master’s degree in Communication Studies. She returned to the legal field in 2012 as a paralegal with Peck Law Firm.



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Muñoz's term as Commissioner ended in May 2015. She continues to reside in Omaha with her family and is currently a paralegal at Marks, Clare, & Richards, LLC law firm where, among her paralegal duties, she serves as a Spanish-language interpreter for clients and her firms' attorneys.

"I am proud to work with an outstanding immigration attorney. We are helping the Latino immigrant community to obtain their green cards, citizenship, and legal status in the U.S. The firm also serves a variety of other legal needs," she said.

She remains in contact with NLAC.

"One of things that I want to suggest to our community is to get informed and invest in education," said Muñoz. "It is important. Please do not stop learning and get involved in your community. Do not rely on just one source of news, but check the same news in different newspapers, TV news channels, and on the internet to have a better idea and to form your own opinion. Education is a continuing process that we all must sustain during our lives."

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