

# LATINO AMERICAN COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED IN 1972 | SUMMER 2015 NEWSLETTER | WWW.LATINOAC.NEBRASKA.GOV



**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Latino - American Commission is to serve as a voice in the Nebraska State Government for Latino Americans/ Latinos.

**Vision Statement:** The vision of the Latino - American Commission is to empower the Latino Community through a pro-active approach to issues that affect their access to educational, political, economical and social opportunities in Nebraska.

## Farewell, Commissioners Santos and Muñoz

Commissioners Gisella Muñoz of Bellevue and Jose Santos of Gretna have retired from the NLAC Board of Commissioners.

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



Jose Santos



Gisella Muñoz

Air Command in Omaha; a position he would hold for the next 22 years.

In 1985, his military career ended and he was seeking his bachelor's in Business Administration at UNO. He was working at the university's military affairs and job services department when he was offered and accepted the position of Labor Law Investigator with the state. In 2000, a task force visited meat-packing plants for observation. Santos was with the task force.

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 said they'd have better education and opportunities.

On Jan. 3, 1963, Santos received his military draft notice but was not sent overseas to Vietnam, instead, he was sent to Nebraska as a member of the U.S. Air Force working communication at Strategic

"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 in the state, and the title of Meatpacking Bills of Rights Coordinator was added to his job title.

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## 2015 Latino Summit & Gallery of Stars Registration

This year's Latino Summit will take place on Tuesday, October 27 at the Younes Conference Center on 416 Talmadge Road in Kearney.

The Latino Summit is an all-day educational conference open to high school students in Nebraska and features a Keynote Speaker, break-out sessions and lunch. The purpose is to encourage high school graduation and offer information, advice and tips on college readiness. There will be several college representatives at the Summit accepting applications and answering questions. The sessions provide information on financial aid, careers and panels with professionals.

The Keynote Speaker is Lina Traslaviña who immigrated to Nebraska from Colombia and received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and International Studies from UNK. Lina will share her story with students, including the hardships and doubts she had to face as an immigrant and trying to "fit in," bringing a positive message.

In addition, NLAC and the Dept. of Education would like to recognize Latino student leaders with the Gallery of Stars. A poster featuring the student will be displayed at the Summit and will include the student's biography and photograph. Students can be nominated by school staff members and their leadership may be in the classroom, community, and/or extracurricular activities, etc. Nomination forms can be found at <http://www.latinosummit.org/>

Please send nominations to [sherri.landis@nebraska.gov](mailto:sherri.landis@nebraska.gov) by Thursday, Sept. 10. If you do not receive a confirmation by Sept. 11, please contact Sherri at (402) 471-8306.

The deadline to register for the Latino Summit is October 19. To register, download and complete the registration form at: <http://www.latinosummit.org/?q=node/3> and submit by fax: (402) 476-7740 or email: [michelle@ncsa.org](mailto:michelle@ncsa.org). The cost is \$10 per person.

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Lazaro Arturo Spindola  
NLAC Executive Director

## Latino American Commission Commissioners

**Adrian Sanchez (Chair)**

**Jack Gutierrez (Vice Chair)**

**Maria Valentin (Secretary)**

**Daniel Castillo**

**Norma de la O**

**Chabella Guzman**

**Aida Olivas**

**Ramon Otero**

**Leticia Rodriguez**

**Deyanira Salgado**

## NLAC Staff

**Lazaro Arturo Spindola. M.D.**  
Executive Director

**Jasel Cantu**  
Public Information Officer

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Staff Assistant

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[www.latinoac.nebraska.gov](http://www.latinoac.nebraska.gov)

## A Message from the Executive Director

Fall is here and with it brings our Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration. This year, our Commemoration takes place on Friday, October 9 at 3:30 p.m. in Lincoln. As part of our Commemoration, we host a statewide essay contest for middle and high school where the winning students read their essays at the Capitol Building. We are also offering a separate essay contests for current college students with a college scholarship. This college essay scholarship is open to all students currently enrolled in a college or university in Nebraska. Details are available on our website. We look forward to receiving many college essays. At this point in time, we are offering only one college scholarship of \$500, but we plan to expand next year. We are presenting Nita Gonzales from Denver as our Keynote Speaker for our celebration this year. Nita is the daughter of Chicano activist Corky Gonzales; Mr. Gonzales was not only a civil rights activist but also a writer and a poet, his famous poem "I Am Joaquin" is as relevant now as it was then. Nita is carrying on her father's work and activism, especially in the field of education. She is an educator and founded a school in Denver that focuses on Latino students and includes a Mexican-American Studies curriculum. We are proud to be hosting her this year.

It is an especially appropriate time to bring back the memory of Corky Gonzalez and others like him. We have watched with sadness as the political candidates' dialogue has turned increasingly toxic toward immigrants in general and Mexican immigrants specifically. We have heard countless proposals from building walls around our borders, deporting millions of individuals, and eliminating birthright citizenship; this last proposal affects all immigrants disregarding their race or ethnicity. We remember that such vitriol was also heard during the depression years and also during the 50's. It seems that whenever the country faces a difficult economy, the strategy is to shift the fear, anger and blame to the immigrant population as a convenient scapegoat thus precluding a more mature discussion on solving the issues faced by our nation.

After we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we present the 2015 Latino Summit on October 27 in Kearney. This all-day conference is for Latino students, details are on page 1 and we are still accepting registrations. I highly recommend this Summit for students.

Dr. Arturo Spindola - Executive Director, Latino American Commission

## Commissioner Election of Officers



Commission Officers were elected at the August Quarterly Meeting. They are (left to right) Deyanira Salgado (Governor's Representative) of Lincoln, Aida Olivas of Hastings, Norma de la O of South Sioux City, Maria Valentin (Secretary) of Omaha, Adrian Sanchez (Chair) of Lincoln, Jack Gutierrez (Vice-Chair) of Columbus, Ramon Otero of Lexington, Daniel Castillo of Lincoln and Chabella Guzman of Scottsbluff. Not pictured: Leticia Rodriguez of Madison.

# NLAC Welcomes Commissioner Daniel Castillo

Daniel Castillo of Lincoln has been appointed by Governor Pete Ricketts to serve on the Latino American Commission's Board of Commissioners.

Castillo replaces Commissioner Gisella Muñoz who served as a Commissioner for almost six years.

Castillo is a Medicaid and Long Term Care Social Worker with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

His work includes processing requests for children and adult Medicaid and the CHIP Program, reviewing applications and making sure applicants meet the state's requirements for Medicaid and CHIP.

He grew up in Newark, New Jersey after he and his family immigrated to the United States from Santo Domingo, the capital city of the Dominican Republic and largest city in the Caribbean, when he was 2-years-old. Castillo said he has always known that he wanted to help the Latino community, which led him on a path to become a certified social worker.

"Ever since I was young, it has always been my dream to work within my community and help others," said Castillo. "Over the years, through my education and career, I have been able to do just that: help those whose voice is at times the least heard."

He received his Associate's degree in 2008 in Human and Social Services from Essex County College and his Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Rutgers University, both in Newark, in 2012.



Daniel Castillo

In 2008, while working as a Rutgers intern at Maria L. Varisco Rogers Charter School he earned the Volunteering Excellence award from AmeriCorps. As an intern, he provided supportive counseling to individual students in accordance with their IEPs.

"I have worked for two Hispanic based non-profit organizations in New Jersey, 'La Casa de Don Pedro' and 'FOCUS Hispanic Center for Community Development,' at both I worked on afterschool youth education and enrichment programs," he said.

Castillo worked at FOCUS for two years as an Assistant Program Coordinator where he successfully developed and implemented lesson plans, and provided staff trainings.

Prior to FOCUS, he had worked at La Casa De Don Pedro Inc. as a Site Coordinator with responsibilities including program design and implementation, student recruitment, staff and student supervision, attendance management and creating an enriching after school curriculum.

He was at FOCUS until 2013 when he moved to Lincoln and began working at DHHS the same year.

Castillo believes he can continue helping the Latino community in his new role: "As a Commissioner, I want to take my dream to the next level. This position will give me the tools and resources I feel are important to help Latinos throughout the State of Nebraska. I looked forward to the next few years of services and hope that I make the voice of the people heard when it is most needed."

## Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest Now Open

NLAC invites the youth of Nebraska to participate in the 9th Annual Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration Essay Contest

National Hispanic Heritage Month was enacted into law on August 17, 1988 observing September 15 to October 15 as a period to celebrate the histories, cultures, and contributions of those who can trace their ancestry to Mexico, Spain, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. For our theme, we have chosen a quote from influential leader Julian Castro. Please tell us in your essay what his words and Hispanic Heritage Month mean to you:

Julian Castro, former mayor of San Antonio, current Secretary of U.S. Housing & Urban Development: – "In the end, the American dream is not a sprint, or even a marathon, but a relay. Our families don't always cross the finish line in the span of one generation. But each generation passes on to the next the fruits of their labor."

When writing your essay about the quote, consider the following:

What do Julian's words mean to you? How can you relate to this quote and to Hispanic Heritage Month? Has this quote influenced your opinion of Hispanic Heritage Month and values it represents? A diverse jury of Nebraskans will judge your essay by grammar, content, creativity, and understanding of the theme.

Eligibility: Students of all ethnicities currently enrolled in a Nebraska public, private, home school or magnet school (grades 6 – 12). Entries welcome in English or Spanish, and must include a signed entry form.

Rules: Essays must be original, typed or legibly handwritten, and double-spaced. The word length is 250 – 400 words for middle school students, and 500 – 700 words for high school students. We reserve the right to disqualify essays that contain offensive language, political messages, or derogatory statements.

Awards: Scholarships, certificates, Kindles, and McDonald's gift cards will be given to six winners. Winning students will be recognized at the Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration scheduled for October 9, 2015 at the Nebraska Capitol Building in Lincoln. First place winners will be asked to read their essay at the Commemoration and McDonald's will publish first place winning essays on their tray liners. The Commission reserves the right to edit essays for fitting purposes.

All essays due by Thursday, September 17, 2015 at 5 P.M. Essays and entry forms may be submitted by email: [Jasel.Cantu@nebraska.gov](mailto:Jasel.Cantu@nebraska.gov), via fax at 402-471-4381, or mailed to: Nebraska Latino American Commission, ATT: Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest, P.O. Box 94965, Lincoln, NE 68509-4965.

# Eight Students Named National Hispanic Scholars

The National Hispanic Recognition Program has bestowed eight Nebraska seniors as National Hispanic Scholars, making them eight of 5,000 Latino students nationwide to receive this honor.

To qualify, the students had to have taken the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in their junior year, be at least one-quarter Hispanic/Latino, be an American citizen or permanent resident, achieve the minimum required PSAT/NMSQT cutoff score and have a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Meet the Scholars:

William Calderon, 17, graduated with a 3.97 GPA placing him near the top of his class at Brownell-Talbot High School in Omaha where he commutes from nearby Bennington.

"I was especially excited to learn of the award because it was one of the first things senior year that showed my hard work in school paying off," said William. "My great-grandparents immigrated to California from Mexico. They knew minimal English and worked long, laborious hours for a living in the fields, as did my grandparents during their childhood. They were determined to make a better life in America not necessarily for themselves, but for their kids, grandchildren, and so on. I aim to honor their hard work in the fields with equally hard work in the classroom."

At Talbot, he earned his Varsity letter in Basketball 2010-12, Baseball 2011-12, and Band 2011-12. He was Class B Honorable Mention for Baseball 2011 and Academic All-State for winter sports 2010-12. He was a member of Talbot's National Honor Society serving as Vice-President in 2011 and President in 2012. He was class Treasurer all four years and is a National Merit Commended Scholar.

"Before I learned better time management skills, my grades started slipping. My parents got me back on track. We have a strong sense of family in my home, and they encouraged me and got me all the help I needed to pull myself and my grades together. I am very grateful for my parents and their sticking with me during that tough, busy time, and I have learned and grown a lot as a student and as a young man."

William is the son of Arturo and Valerie Calderon. He will attend Mississippi State University in Starkville, Miss. on their Provost Scholarship of \$81,650 and the Bagley College of Engineering Excellence Scholarship of \$12,000. He plans to pursue a degree in Chemical Engineering and continue on to earn a Ph.D.

Jonathan R. Deemer, 18, graduated fourth in his class from Lincoln's College View Academy with a 3.94 GPA. The son of Gary and Lisette Deemer, he can trace his roots to Cuba through his maternal family: "I'm extremely proud to call myself a National Hispanic Scholar. Both of my mom's parents were born in Cuba but emigrated to the U.S. when Castro came to power. Most of my Hispanic family lives out of town, but whenever I see them, it feels like home. I'm proud of my Hispanic heritage."

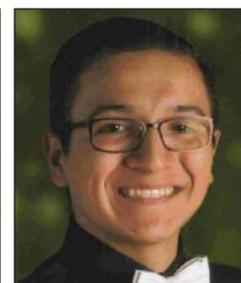
His academic accomplishments include scoring a 34 on the ACT, being on the Honor Roll and Principal List, serving as President and Pastor on the National Honor Society, and his senior class President and Public



Jonathan Deemer



Cristobal Garcia



Brady Wilkerson

Relations officer. He is a six-time Academic All-State recipient, and is an All-State Tennis Honorable Mention.

"My studying habits were simply to work whenever possible. The many activities I was in involved in taught me how to efficiently manage my time. Don't let your grades slip early. My GPA dropped when I was an underclassman because of indifference. Choose to work hard. It may be easier for some, but success is always a choice," he said.

Jonathan will be attending the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Col., a military academy that does not charge tuition, but has strict admission policies and standards. In addition, a student must receive a nomination from their U.S. Senator or U.S. Representative. Jonathan was one of 17 students to receive a nomination from Congressman Jeff Fortenberry. He will major in political science and plans to work with U.S. Air Force Combat Rescue.

Cristobal Garcia, 18, graduated Salutatorian from the Omaha Central High School with a 4.86 GPA on a 5.0 scale. He was on the National Honor Society and Latino Leaders, received the Central High School Top Ten Percent Distinguished Scholars Award, the Latino Leaders Academic Achievement Award and is a Purple Feather Honoree.

He graduated under the International Baccalaureate Program and will have internationally recognized diploma. He credits his parents, Jorge Garcia and Olivia Valladares, for instilling pride in his Mexican heritage.

"I was born to Mexican parents and am descended from a long line of Mestizos. Since childhood, my parents have instilled in me the many aspects of traditional Mexican culture. As a result, my Mexican heritage is a fundamental, if not the most important, aspect of my persona. For these reasons, I carry it with me wherever I go and champion it enthusiastically," he said.

He will attend Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. and major in Computer Science aspiring to become a Computer Software Engineer.

Brady Wilkerson, 17, has been on the Honor Roll all four years at Humboldt-Table Rock-Steinauer (HTRS) High School in Humboldt. He graduated sixth in his class with a 3.93 GPA. Nationally, he earned the President's Award for Educational Excellence from the U.S. Dept. of Education. He was Treasurer and President of Table Rock Christian Youth Group, and a member of National Honor Society, Quiz Bowl, Academic Decathlon, One Act Play, STARS Leadership, and a Mentor.

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# Binational Education Teacher Exchange Program 2015



Thirteen educators from Mexico were honored on June 22 for participating in the Binational Migrant Education Teacher Exchange Program with the Nebraska Dept. of Education. They taught at elementary schools in Alliance, Columbus, Madison, Omaha and Scottsbluff for several weeks in May and June. From left to right (Standing) NLAC Director Arturo Spindola, Alaide Terriquez Oliva, Edna Rivera López, Hilda Valadez Ruvalcaba, Commissioner of Education Dr. Matthew Blomstedt, Consul of Mexico Guadalupe Sanchez Salazar, Secretary of State John Gale, Dept. of Education Senior Administrator of Equity & Instructional Strategies Dr. Mary Ann Losh, Alethia Gomez Carrillo, Marissa Ibarra Trejo, Adriana Cepeda, Alejandra Quiñonez Esquer, Maria Analhí Peña Reyes, ESL Coordinator Susan Mayberger, Lindsay Martinez Baldenegro and Dept. of Education Migrant Education Program Moderator Sue Henry. (Kneeling) Erick Castañeda Enríquez, Jorge Ramirez Agüero, Luis Cárdenas Gámez and Luis Garza Aguilar. Secretary of State John Gale awarded honorary Nebraska citizenship. The educators returned to Mexico in July.

## Summer Intern at NLAC



Edwin Acevedo, 16, interned from June 14 to July 24 at the NLAC office in the Capitol Building.

He received the paid internship at NLAC via the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's Work and Gain Experience in

the Summer (WAGES) program, which is for visually impaired teenagers to gain practical work experience. Teens from across Nebraska worked at sites in Lincoln, participated in learning activities such as navigating with walking canes, and lived at the UNL dorms for 10 weeks.

Edwin researched information relevant for NLAC such as the GED pass rate among Latinos in Nebraska (75 percent), the number of Latino deaths nationwide by police (17 percent) and expanded the email list.

A first generation Mexican-American, his parents Roberto Acevedo and Elvia Jara, are from Oaxaca. Edwin is an incoming junior at Omaha South High School. He plans to attend UNO and major in Accounting.

## Scholars Continued...

Brady is unique in that he is both a National Hispanic Scholar and a National Achievement Finalist, a title recognizing Black American high school students with high PSAT/NMSQT scores.

"I was pretty excited when I found out, and can honestly say I am still excited. It has definitely helped open doors when it comes to college opportunities," said Brady. "My Hispanic heritage comes from my father's side of the family; my great-grandmother came to the United States from Mexico. From my mother's side, I have both African-American and Belgian roots. I feel like it's always been a positive influence in my life."

He has received many scholarships including the UNL Chancellor's Scholarship and Susan T. Buffett Foundation Scholarship. Brady is the son of Kelli Bilbrey and Brian Wilkerson. He will be attending UNL with plans to earn a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and Ph.D. in math. He aspires to work at the U.S. Dept. of Defense as a Mathematician.

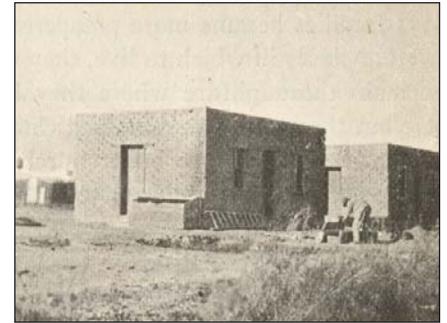
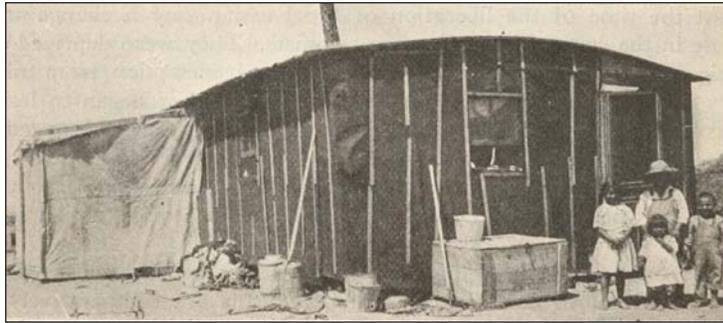
The remaining National Hispanic Scholars in Nebraska are:

- Carley Marie Ayers, formerly of Mother of Divine Grace School of Ojai, Calif. who moved to Nebraska her senior year;
- Paul Cervantes of Creighton Preparatory Academy in Omaha;
- Matthew Jonathan Kernen of Concordia Junior/Senior High School in Omaha; and
- Eric Bay Perez of Papillion-La Vista High School in Papillion.

# Pieces of Nebraskan Hispanic History

## 1923: Mexican Families in Child Labor Report

(Right) A family stands outside their "tar paper shack" near Scottsbluff, names and background unknown. (Far right) Adobe buildings built by families outside Minatare in a Mexican colony. Many have since been torn down. Photos courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society.



*"Children in the Sugar Beet Fields of the North Platte Valley of Nebraska, 1923," written by Sara A. Brown and Robie O. Sargent, was originally published in the 67th edition of "Nebraska History" in 1986. Excerpts and photographs have been reprinted with permission by the Nebraska State Historical Society. For the complete article online, visit: [www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/index](http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/index)*

In 1923, the Congressional National Child Labor Committee sent Brown and Sargent to investigate child labor in the North Platte Valley beet fields. The following is from the "Family Study," which found that more than half of all contract laborers were under 16, and nearly one-third of these workers were under 10-years-old.

Eighty-three percent of all children in the study were American born. In 355 families, there were 995 children under 16 doing beet work, 78.8 percent identified as Russian-Germans, followed by Spanish-American and Mexican families.

Beet growers worked with laborers entering a contract (contract labor), the Company was notified, and the grower made arrangements directly with the family. When the grower did not find his own "beet tenders" the company secured them, sometimes traveling as far as San Antonio to bring back entire families of workers.

The Co-operative Beet Growers Association shared with growers the best ways to find their workforce; mainly to hire "experienced family labor" early and help them move. A majority of families arrived by May. The Association provided grocery store credit for these families.

The report states most migrant mother's worked in the fields leaving housework to small children. Homes had a stove, a window and were lit by kerosene lamps. Many children lived in overcrowded housing with poor sanitation, lighting and ventilation. Houses were built on the yard of the grower's home, or along the barn or irrigation ditches.

In June, families would be "bunching" with their hoes along the beet rows. Directly behind them, children crawled along the ground on their hands and knees plucking out other beet plants. They were "thinning," which afforded work for the youngest. There were 303 workers under 10, some as young as five-years-old, engaged in thinning. Between thinning time in June and harvest in October, there had been other work: "hoeing" and "weeding". All 995 child workers of this study under 16 engaged in one or both of these processes.

All laborers were called "foreigners" by locals, and other terms. This distinction was drawn between nationalities, not by property nor by labor. The children of these different groups did not mingle.

Even though children worked, they were not contracted. The father would be contracted to do the handwork on a given number of acres. Of the 297 contract labor families in the study there were 1,634 workers for 15,030 acres, or 50.6 acres per family and 9.2 acres per worker. At the rate of \$21.00 an acre, they earned an average of \$1,062.00 per family and \$193.16 per worker.

The 1,634 hand workers were in the following age groups: 247 were children under 10; 568 were between 10 and 15; 199 were between 16 and 20; and 620 were 21 and over. At the rate of \$21.00 per acre, an average of \$128.30 to \$194.26 was earned per child under sixteen. Children from ages five to 16 worked more than 6,000 acres total.

Farmers and laborers were questioned about the working children. An American farmer said, "Children are cheap labor. They get nothing out of it but board and clothes," and a father said, "Little children 'thin' fine, no hurt them in backs. Hurt me in back bad, to bend all day."

There were hardly any reading materials found in the homes, but one Mexican family was noted having a well-worn Spanish language book.

When the harvest was over, families would return to their cities or states, but many settled near beet fields establishing colonies thanks to the Company. Prior to 1923, the Company experimented in establishing a colony of Mexican families on the outskirts of the beet district. The colony was a success, and the Company set aside land at Scottsbluff and Minatare, selling lots to Mexicans. Almost every trading center had a "Little Mexico." Bayard had two colonies. Minatare and Scottsbluff had one, and Mitchell had a growing Mexican population.

Families used soil to make bricks for Adobe houses. Of Mexican families, 73.6 percent had a house or a "fixed abiding place." Only 26.3 percent did not, but they included more than 200 child workers.

These findings, published in 1924 by the National Child Labor Committee, indicated that child workers, "lose weeks from the public schools" and recommended strict enforcement of the compulsory school attendance law as well as prohibition of the, "employment of children under 12 years of age as contract laborers."

## Upcoming Events

- **Holiday: September 7**  
Labor Day
- **Event: September 9**  
Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation
- **Deadline: September 17**  
Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest
- **Event: October 9**  
Hispanic Heritage Month Commemoration
- **Holiday: October 12**  
Columbus Day
- **Holiday: November 11**  
Veterans' Day
- **Meeting: November 21**  
NLAC Quarterly Meeting - Lincoln
- **Holiday: November 26-27**  
Thanksgiving Day

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## Dr. Hector P. Garcia Proclamation



*On July 8, Governor Pete Ricketts signed a Proclamation observing July 26th as Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day in Nebraska. From left to right: American GI Forum Members John Barrientos, Jr., Abelardo Hernandez, Sally Ray, Governor Ricketts, Dr. Marty Ramirez who was the Proclamation ceremony speaker, NLAC Commissioner Adrian Sanchez, NLAC Public Information Officer Jasel Cantu, and NLAC Staff Assistant Dora Lima.*

## Commissioners Continued...

As the Governor's Representative, Santos did not have term limits allowing him to be the longest serving NLAC Commissioner. He has advice for new 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 continues to serve as an advisor for NLAC and the Dept. of Labor.

Muñoz was appointed in 2009 by then-Governor Dave Heineman, representing 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. 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 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.

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.

"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.," said Muñoz, who remains in contact with NLAC. "One of things that I want to suggest to our community is to get informed and invest in education. 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."