The Bill was introduced, signed by Senator Terry Carpenter, and co-signed by Senator Eugene Mahoney. The identification of the Bill is LB 1081 for an act to create a Commission on Mexican-Americans; to provide for an Executive Director and to provide for election of members and fix their terms and compensation.
OUR MISSION:
Our Mission is to serve as a link between the Nebraska State Government and the Hispanic/Latino Community.

OUR VISION:
Our Vision is to empower the Hispanic/Latino Community through a proactive approach to issues that affect their access to education, social, political, and economic opportunities in Nebraska.

HISTORY:
The Mexican American Commission was first established with the passage of LB1081 during the 1972 Legislature. On July 15, 2010, LB139 officially changed our name to the Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans. The Commission is comprised of ten commissioners from across the State of Nebraska, one of which serves as the Governor’s representative. Commissioners are selected by the Governor to represent the diversity of the Hispanic/Latino population in Nebraska. The Commission joins forces with other organizations to identify, and work to resolve, issues that affect Nebraska’s Hispanic/Latino population. We support and promote annual events with many of these organizations to encourage education and inspire Hispanic/Latino youth.

Created
81-8,262. Commission on Latino-Americans; created; term, defined. There is hereby created the Commission on Latino-Americans. For purposes of sections 81-8,262 to 81-8,271.01, commission means the Commission on Latino-Americans. Source: Laws 1972, LB 1081, § 1; Laws 2010, LB139, § 1. Effective Date: July 15, 2010

Functions
81-8,265. Commission; functions. The functions of the commission shall be to:
(1) Gather and disseminate information and conduct hearings, conferences, and special studies on problems and programs concerning Latino-Americans;
(2) Serve the needs of Latino-Americans, especially in the fields of education, employment, health, housing, welfare, and recreation by offering such services as it may establish for the translation of documents and for the direct assistance of clients, exclusive of legal representation, in matters relating to any federal department or agency or any department or agency of the state or a political subdivision thereof;
(3) Develop, coordinate, and assist public and private organizations and coordinate and assist the efforts of state departments and agencies to serve the needs of Latino-Americans;
(4) Propose new programs concerning Latino-Americans;
(5) Evaluate existing programs and proposed legislation concerning Latino-Americans;
(6) Stimulate public awareness of the problems of Latino-Americans by conducting a program of public education and encourage the Governor and the Legislature to develop programs to deal with these problems; and
(7) Conduct training programs for community leadership and service project staff.

Governor James Exon appointed Yolanda Chavez-Nuncio of Aida Nebraska, Rose Carmen Martinez of Gering, and Anthony Mandujano of Scottsbluff as Commissioners.

Stanley Porras, Director of the Mexican American Commission from 1972-1979 with the Honorable Fernando E.C. de Baca, during a trip to Washington D.C. attending the Forum of National Hispanic Organization. (1976)

Governors Office
State Capitol
Lincoln, NE 68508

Commissioners:

- Glen Soukup
- B. N. Garcia
- Joseph J. Juarez
- Raymond Ramirez
- Jesse Quijas
- Rachel Rodriguez
- Ignacio Valdez
- Louisa Garcia
- Simon Orta
- Father Valdez

City:  Exp. Term:

- Governors  Rep.
- Lou  5/16/75
- Omaha  5/16/75
- G.I.  5/16/75
- Scb.  5/16/74
- Scb.  5/16/74
- G.I.  5/16/74
- Brule  5/16/73*
- Lnc.  5/16/73*
- Scb.  5/16/73*

Listed above are the Commissioners of the Mexican American Commission who served in the early '70s and their specified regions.

Here is a list of Commissioners whose terms expired in 1973, 1974, and 1975. Glen Soukup was the Governor’s Representative.

In the above photo, the Commission Staff for the Lincoln Office is sending a Happy New Year message. During those years, the commission had two different offices: one that served the Scottsbluff area and another one serving the Lincoln community.
In the ‘70s the Mexican American Commission conducted the First Front-line Counseling Needs Assessment workshop, a continuation of a grant awarded to the Mexican American Commission in Washington.

**COALITION OF HISPANIC ORGANIZATIONS FORMED IN OMAHA**

For the last year, within Mexican American groups within Omaha has discussed the possibility of uniting to present a concerted demonstration of the needs of the Hispanic community. Information discussed was finally put into action after representatives from the American G.I. Forum, the Chicano Awareness Center, the Chicano Youth Council, and the Nebraska Council of Churches reached the group developed an organizational structure for the coalition and the following preamble:

If we as Chicanos are to guarantee a better life for ourselves and for future generations to come, we must remain in constant struggle, stemming from our differences and understand that we are one. When we suffer, we suffer as a Race. When we are oppressed, we are oppressed as Mexicans. When we are disfranchised, we are disfranchised as Mexican Americans. When we are discriminated against, we are discriminated against as Mexican Americans. When we are targeted by a disproportional imbalance, we are imbalanced as Mexican Americans. For when we aspire, we aspire as one Race. When we dream of a better life for our children, we dream of a better life for all. The G.I. Forum, the Chicano Awareness Center, the Youth Councils, and the Nebraska Council of Churches have come together in common bond to form the “United Hispanic Coalition of Omaha” dedicated to the advancement of all Hispanics of Omaha. Tomorrow belongs to us.

With these thoughts in mind, we as a community are united in purpose and fulfill the aspirations and dreams which for so long have been unreasonable for many. The coalition consists of:

- American G.I. Forum
- Citizenship Project
- Chicano Parish Council
- Holy Name of Jesus
- Chicano Awareness Center
- Mexican American Club
- Mexican American Commission

During this decade a coalition of Hispanic organizations formed in Omaha to discuss the possibility of uniting to present a concerted demonstration of the needs of the Mexican American community. The Mexican American Commission was part of this coalition.
Pete Urdiales, our second Executive delivered a testimony against the bill LB51. He said: “...in its attempt to penalize the employer for hiring undocumented workers, would open the door to blatant discrimination by the same employer against the Nebraska Mexican residents”.

In the 70s, the Commission highlighted Susie Gonzalez as having the first individually owned Mexican restaurant in Grand Island.

During its first Latino/Hispanic recognition, the Commission honored outstanding individuals that made a difference in the community.

In the 70s, the Commission hired a research analyst for the Lincoln office.

In 1979, Governor Thone signed the Hispanic Heritage Week Proclamation. On the right side is the proclamation signed by Governor Thone.
The first proposed budget for the Mexican American Commission was $32,980 for the fiscal year 1972-1973.

In the above photo the Commission Committee structure in the '70s.

First Annual Hispanic Awards Banquet

These are the minutes of the first meeting of the Mexican American Commission held on December 10th, 1971, months before the presentation of the bill in the legislature. John Sullivan, Administrative Assistant to the Governor, was present as a representative of the Governor.
Governor Thone announced the formation of a special task force for the Nebraska Minority Business Enterprise Program. Jesse Cervantes, our executive director back then, was present.

The Commission has recognized the importance of the Census and since the ‘80s has been part of the awareness campaign of the benefits of being counted.

Some of the staff that helped the Commission during the ‘80s.

The ‘80s were times for change for women leadership. Linda Valencia was the first Deputy Sheriff in Douglas County. She graduated in 1975 with a degree in Social Work. Her story was featured in our monthly newsletter.

The Commission presented an award to Alvaro Gypsy Escamilla for his involvement and leadership role in the development of youth programs and prison rehabilitation efforts for Mexican Americans in Nebraska. Mr. Escamilla is presently President of the MATA (Mexican Awareness Through Association) Club at the State Penitentiary in Lincoln.

In the ‘80s, the Hispanic Women’s Committee of LULAC was formed. Olivia Guerra was the chairperson, her story was featured in our monthly newsletter.
Bilingual education was a priority for the Mexican American Commission. In the ‘80s, our newsletter highlighted the ups and downs of the proposed bilingual education during the Reagan administration.

The Mexican American Commission was very active in creating workshops for unrepresented communities. In the ‘80s, the Commission held its second workshop for the Hispanic Elderly.

OMAHA HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FORMS

A number of Hispanic businessmen gathered recently in Omaha to form a steering committee for the creation of a Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The advantages inherent in such an organization and technical assistance was provided by Marcus Rincón, Field Representative of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce based in Kansas City.

The Mexican American Commission announced the first Omaha Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. A number of Hispanic businessmen gathered to form a committee for the creation of a Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

COMMISSION DISCUSSES DEATHS

On Saturday, January 9, 1982, the Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting. One of the topics of concern was with two known fatal accidents at the Iowa Beef Processing Plant in Dakota City, Nebraska. The Commission was particularly concerned about this situation because the Service Company that does the cleaning at the plant employs a workforce that is approximately 70 percent Hispanic, many of whom speak only Spanish.

The grave nature of these incidents were brought to Commissioner Antonio Gomez of South Sioux City, and in turn brought to the Commission meeting. The type of accident which has caught the attention of the Commission has occurred twice within the past five months, in apparently the same area and on the night shift which is primarily comprised of Mexican Americans.

Some work accidents from our constituents have been brought up to the attention of the Commission over our years of service. In the ‘80s, two fatal accidents at the IBP Plant in Dakota City were known. The Commission made sure the rights of the workers were enforced.
NEW COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ TAPPE

Governor Robert Kerrey announced the appointment of Olga Sanchez Tappe of Omaha to the Mexican American Commission. The 36-year-old Tappe is a Spanish and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at the Whitfield Community Academy, and a former ESL teacher at the Northwest Technical Community College. She has a master's degree in education from the University of Nebraska. In 1990, Olga received the governor’s highest honor, the Volunteer of the Year Award. In 1990, Olga was honored by the Governor’s Hispanic Affairs office.

The 80’s Governor Robert Kerrey announced the appointment of Olga Sanchez Tappe, Ann Valdez, and Antonio Gomez as Commissioners. Lazerio Flores was hired as the new Public Information Officer.

HISPANIC ART EXHIBITION

The Sturtevant Museum of Omaha was the site for the First Annual Hispanic Art Exhibition on October 21, 1984. The exhibition was successful and has been considered as a future major event for the Hispanic community.

The Commission presented a plaque to Senator Karen Kilgari for her commitment to improve the lives of the Hispanic community.

The commission presented the First Annual Hispanic Art Exhibition in the 80’s. This exhibition was held at the Storz Mansion of Omaha. The Mexican American Commission presented the First Annual Hispanic Art Exhibition in the 80’s. This exhibition was held at the Storz Mansion of Omaha. The work of sculptor Ana Sparta was shown at the Storz Mansion.

In the 80’s, the Mexican American Commission joined thousands of health organizations to create awareness about AIDS when the virus began to spread throughout the United States. It was important for the Commission to keep our community informed.

COMMISSION RECEIVES COMMENDATION ON ASSISTING MEAT PACKING PLANT

At a news conference held Saturday, August 18, 1984 at the Scottsbluff City Council Conference Room, State Senator William Nichols announced the awarding of $50,000 to the City of Scottsbluff for its efforts in helping to clean up the waste from the packing plant.

Senorita Sparta, a talented painter and self-employed skin care consultant, organized the art exhibition as a way to introduce Hispanic culture into the community and to share it with all the other ethnic groups.

When the news conference was held, the Commission was presented with a plaque and a commendation for its efforts in helping to clean up the waste from the packing plant.

The Mexican American Commission was, asked in March of this year by Scottsbluff Hispanic residents to look into the situation of the plant closing. It was hoped by the citizens that something could be done to re-open the packing plant. With this in mind, Director Perez began contacting different people, such as Dick Flannery, principal stockholder of the packing plant, and the Department of Economic Development and the city of Scottsbluff with the intent of generating interest in the re-opening of the plant.

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In June 4, 1985, the Commission was defunded. The Legislature adopted Legislative Bill 722 called “The State Budget Bill” which included eliminating funds for the Mexican American Commission. Governor Bob Kerrey signed the bill into law within changes to it.

On July 1st, 1986, the Mexican American Commission was refunded and became fully operational once again.

NEW COMMISSIONER

Con Sanchez of Minatare, Nebraska has been appointed by Governor Kay Orr to the Commission. Con works as a self-employed building contractor. Currently in his ninth year as a City Councilman, he brings valuable public service experience to the Commission.

A dedication ceremony to the Plaza de la Raza was held to recognize the Hispanic presence in 1988. The name, La Plaza de la Raza, was selected because of South Omaha’s diverse ethnic population, and Hispanics have used the plaza the most since its development in 1982. The symbol on the plaque is the Aztec calendar. This event was also featured in our newsletter.

Nebraskaland Days had a Mexican Fiesta back in the ‘80s. This was very popular with the Latino community. The Mexican American Commission and its newsletter featured the queen and royalty, and the woman and Hispanic man of the year.
Since its inception, the Mexican American Commission has spread information about voting rights. In 1996, we dedicated the front cover to the Latino Vote in the USA - Campaign 1996.

Over the years, Senator Ernie Chambers has been an ally for the Latino community in our state. In the ’90s, he introduced LB 633, which extended food stamps to legal immigrants, and LB 864, which extended certain state welfare benefits to legal immigrants who lost federal aid under the Federal Welfare Reform Act.

The Mexican American Commission presented Natalie Martinez as the Administrative Assistant.
Our former Executive Director Cecilia Olivarez Huerta visited the White House while President Bill Clinton was in office. She expressed to the former President how immigration impacts race relations and how the majority of the non-Hispanic community views Hispanics.

A MEMORIAL TO EDUARDO GUERRA OF LINCOLN

Eduardo Guerra, owner of the Rio Grande Restaurant, died Sunday, April 16th, 1990. He was 45.

Guerra opened the Rio Grande Restaurant in 1978 with his wife, Ana Maria. It has specialized in Tex-Mex cooking that originated in Northern Mexico and southern Texas.

He served as a past commissioner of the Mexican-American Commission and was an admiral in the mythical Nebraska Navy. He was also a member of the Cathedral of the Risen Christ, the American Legion Post 3, the Veteran of Foreign Wars and the American GI Forum, as well as a member of the National Restaurant Association, the Lincoln Beverage Association, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, and the National Federation of Independent Business.

Survivors, in addition to his wife, include: a son, Omar G.A., of Lincoln; his mother, Leonor, of Merrill, NE.; two sisters, Patricia Guerra and Esther Marquez, both of Denver, CO; and a brother, Raimundo Guerra, of Lincoln.

The Commission honored Eduardo Guerra of Lincoln who passed away in the 90s. He was a Latino entrepreneur and owner of Rio Grande Restaurant. Eduardo served as a past Commissioner of the Mexican American Commission and was an admiral in the Nebraska Navy.

The Mexican American Commission recognized the 20th anniversary of NAF – Multicultural Human Development Corporation. In the 90’s NAF had seven different offices from North Platte to South Sioux City, Nebraska.

The photo exhibit Un Tesoro de Nebraska/Nebraska’s Treasure was dedicated at the cultural fair in Scottsbluff in the 90s. This exhibit was a cooperative partnership with the Mexican American Commission and the Nebraska State Historical Society.

As we pass Thanksgiving and enter the Christmas holidays, we have many things to be thankful for and wishes to come true.
I am thankful for the opportunity to serve those who are in need via the Mexican-American Commission. The road from the early ‘70’s to the present has not been easy for the Commission. We have experienced administrative changes, and an ever growing anti-Latino movement, racism, and lack of support by our non-Latino community. Yet the Commission has endured.
I will admit that the priorities of the Commission have never been more clear. As the new Chair, my pledge will be to help develop and strengthen the Commission’s priorities. I believe the Commission needs to be more focused, and we definitely need to reach out into the Latino community and establish a dialogue with all concerned. We further need to support local organizations as they struggle to confront the issues facing Latinos in Nebraska.
Finaly, my wish for the Commission would be to respect our individual differences and to place helping Latinos/Mexican Americans/Chicanos as a high priority. We need to be vigilant about helping our government and our country understand that the health, welfare, and education of Latinos should be one of the highest priorities for our nation and state.

In the photo above, a column by Marty Ramirez when he was elected Chair of the Commission. “As the new Chair my pledge will be to help develop and strengthen the commission priorities,” he said.

On several occasions, the Mexican American Commission recognized individuals that take the oath to our country. Raul Santos, Alba Coto, Luz Eucharne, Jacqueline Rivera, Roberto Rivera, Jose Reyes, and Agustin Escultia became U.S. citizens and were featured in our newsletter.

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Mexican-American Commission Newsletter
"A PUBLICATION FOR NEBRASKA’S LATINOS"

Census 2000: What You Need to Know

Beginning mid-March, everyone living in the United States will receive something very important in the mail: a questionnaire for the 2000 census. The census provides information to various groups and can have a direct impact on the community that you live in. The numbers can help define public improvements strategies in neighborhoods with a lot of traffic congestion, elderly people living alone or overcrowded schools.

The numbers obtained through the census help communities in times of need. Many 9/11 emergency systems are based on maps developed for the last census. Census information helps health providers predict the spread of disease through communities with children or elderly people. When tornadoes or earthquakes hit, the census will recovers how many people will need help.

The census makes the government work for you. It’s a good way to tell our leaders who we are and what we need.

Important information about the Census 2000 was shared in our newsletter about the protection of privacy and how the numbers obtained through the Census help communities in times of need.

Legislación Nueva:

El Senador Matt Considine, del distrito 16 (Dominant), ha presentado LB 1363. Esta legislación crea un grupo de 16 personas, bajo la Comisión Mexicana Americana en una misión especial. La misión es investigar y estudiar el impacto de inmigrantes en las comunidades de Nebraska en las siguientes áreas: educación, alojamiento, transporte, el sistema de justicia, los servicios de salud y el crecimiento y desarrollo económico.

El gobernador instalará el papel del estado en ayudando los trabajadores inmigrantes mientras otros trabajadores se integran en las comunidades locales y la mano de obra. Además el gobernador examinará el impacto que tienen programas federales en el aumento de la emigración de inmigrantes y la economía del estado.

Los miembros de este grupo serán designados por el Gobernador, el grupo ejecutivo de la junta legislativa y el director ejecutivo de la Comisión Mexicana Americana.

LB 1363 ha sido designado como legislación con posibilidad y está en primer nivel (general file). Otra propuesta de ley de asignación para $25,000 también ha sido presentada.

Los que están interesados en copias o más información acerca de LB 1363 deben ponerse en contacto con la Comisión Mexicana Americana en (402) 473-7299 o en la Legislatura en (402) 471-3857 o visitar su web site en: www.macc.com ne at bill.htm.

Upcoming Events

1. Cinco de Mayo Celebration in Scottsbluff on May 6
2. Performance by Ballet Folklorico at Western Nebraska Community College from 7:30-9:30 p.m. Business After Hours 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Our newsletter presented information about LB 1363. This legislation was meant to create a group of 16 people under the Mexican-American Commission with a special mission. The mission was to research and study the impact of immigrants in Nebraska communities in the areas of education, housing, transportation, the justice system, health services, economic growth and economic development.

More than 300 Nebraska high school students participated in the fourth Hispanic Student Summit, setting an attendance record from previous years. The students also participated in the plenary sessions dedicated to informing the student body about the possibilities and potentialities of higher education.

"EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS" CELEBRATION

The Mexican-American Commission in partnership with Sheldon Art Gallery in Lincoln and many community agencies and advisors hosted the "Day of the Death-Día de los Muertos" celebration. This event was the first at Sheldon and included an "ofrenda" designed by Martin Ramirez of Mexico along with Linda Garcia and Jose Garcia Rios from Omaha. Featured were Mariachi Luna y Sol from Omaha and Grupo Folklorico Sangre Azteca from Lincoln. Congratulations to all. Check out our web page for updates and activities. Over 1200 people attended the afternoon event.

Commission’s Note:

The Mexican American Commission in partnership with Sheldon Art Gallery in Lincoln and many community agencies hosted the Day of the Death celebration.

Essay Contest’s Sponsor, Arturo DeAnda (DeAnda Auto Sales- South Sioux City, NE), congratulates the winners.
In the 2000s, the Mexican American Commission launched a TV show. “Diversity TV” was a new bilingual television program, dedicated to exploring and promoting diversity from different points of view. Diversity TV was broadcasted in the cities of Lincoln, Crete, and Seward.

Commissioner Theresa Palacios participated in a reading activity with several Norfolk children.

STATE LEGISLATURE 2008: MAC’S INVOLVEMENT

On February 28th, 2008, the Nebraska Legislature’s Judiciary Committee voted down two controversial legislative proposals that would have affected the lives of approximately 45,000 undocumented immigrants in the state of Nebraska. The bill was introduced by Sen. Mike Friend of Omaha on behalf of Governor Dave Heinemann, intended to deny state and local benefits to undocumented immigrants, including in-state tuition assistance. LB 963 was killed in committee on a 5-1 vote.

In 2008, the Mexican American Commission newsletter featured LB 963, a controversial legislative proposal that would have affected the lives of approximately 45,000 undocumented immigrants in the state of Nebraska. The bill was introduced by Sen. Mike Friend of Omaha on behalf of Governor Dave Heinemann, intended to deny state and local benefits to undocumented immigrants, including in-state tuition assistance. LB 963 was killed in committee on a 5-1 vote.

Our 2006 newsletter featured rallies in different Nebraskan cities that were organized in response to a bill passed in the house that would speed up deportations, tighten border security, and criminalize illegal immigrants.

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2006

During his time as Commissioner, Jose Santos worked with the Attorney General, Mexican Consulate, US Department of Labor, Nebraska Workforce Development, and OSHA on compensation issues brought to various entities’ attention regarding contract workers.

Cecilia Ollivarez Huerta, the former Executive Director, received recognition for 15 years of working for the State. She also received the Government Leadership Award from the Heartland Leadership Conference.

In 2006, Commissioner Norma de la O worked on plenty of issues. One issue that made the news was about the County Attorney's office. The office publicly said that his office was going to initiate some plan to curtail illegal immigration in Dakota County.

Commissioner Yolanda Nuncio spoke about a study conducted by NCLR, regarding the immigration raids which took place in Grand Island meatpacking plants back in December 2006. Commissioner Nuncio made copies of the study available to the Commissioners.

2007

Executive Director commented on the newly created Community Outreach, a consortium is a group that involves other government agencies including the Legal Aid of Nebraska, Equal Opportunity Commission, State Attorney General Office, Mexican-American Commission, and other agencies.

Jose Garcia from Omaha wrote a letter of support to the press regarding the Commission's name change stating the name should reflect the state demographics changes. He expressed his unconditional support for the Commission on this.

2008

The Commission felt the need to keep the Latino community informed about the international driver's license scam that happened during 2008 and sent a press release to all Spanish media about this situation to protect the community.

2009

On May 26th, Angel Freytez, Acting Executive Director, testified in favor of LR 223, a resolution that intended to urge the members of Nebraska’s Congressional Delegation to pass immigration reform legislation.
The celebration of the Day of the Dead has become a tradition for the Commission. Our newsletter features every year different presentations and exhibitions across Nebraska of this celebration.

The Nebraska Commission on Latino Americans featured a sculpture in Sioux City, honoring the late Tomas Salas from South Sioux City who was a Commissioner in the ’80s. She was one of the four community leaders to be recognized as a most dedicated lifelong community advocate.

Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler with middle school essay winners Noah Randolph and Divith Rajagopal. Also, with high school winner Pamela Cante and middle school winner Yair Garcia.

The 12th Annual Latino Summit reunited 600 Latino students from 30 school districts. College recruiter tables answered questions and provided financial aid information. Keynote speaker Lina Traslavina shared the importance of self-confidence.

Jose Santos was recognized by Chair Adrian Sanchez for his many years of dedication and service. Santos retired as a commissioner in 2015.

During the 2010s, The Nebraska State Historical Society and the Commission held a Public Forum at Guadalupe Center in Scottsbluff requesting the community’s help in finding information on adobe houses with the purpose of locating, identifying, documenting, and preserving the remaining adobe houses.

The 2015 Day of the Dead Events in Nebraska

The 2015 Latino Summit in Kearney

2010s

Because of the demographic changes of the Latino community in the state, on July 15, 2010 the LB139 officially went into effect and changed the Commission’s name for the first time to “Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans”.

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The Commission donated several items to the Nebraska History Museum including the top 10 essays for Hispanic Heritage Month.

**Human Trafficking Awareness Month Proclamation**

Governor Ricketts signed a proclamation observing January of 2016 as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Jasel Cantu and Adrian Sanchez from the Commission were present.

Our former Executive Director, Dr. Arturo Lazaro Spindola testified in front of the legislature supporting a law that now provides prenatal healthcare for Latino women, regardless of their immigration status. He also testified for legislation allowing driver's and professional licenses for “Dreamers,” young people brought to this country illegally when they were children.

Antoinette Caudillo and Brenda Gallardo were two of the legislative pages in 2016 working with the legislative session and the only Latinas to serve as pages that year.

Dr. Spindola was present at a signing Proclamation ceremony observing April of 2015 as Minority Health Month in Nebraska.

Teachers from Mexico visit our state every year. The Commission assists the Department of Education with the logistics of the ceremony of appreciation.

**Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day Proclamation**

Every year the Governor’s office presents a proclamation signed by the Governor observing July 26th as Dr. Hector Garcia Day in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture announced the winners of their annual youth poster contest in observance of National Ag Day. Bryana Vargas, a Latina student, was the winner of the contest.
2010

In 2010, the Mexican American Commission recognized Severiano Franco, former Interim Executive Director, for his superior service to the Commission since its early beginnings.

Interim Director Franco stated that LB139 was adopted and passed by the Legislature in regards the name change of the Commission. Now, the official name of the Commission is the Commission on Latino Americans. The justification used on the floor was that the name of the agency should reflect demographics statewide.

2011

In 2011, the Commission joined an immigration task force. The first meeting was held on March 5th in Lincoln and the second meeting on April 4th in Grand Island. The Commission was asked to join due to its expertise and involvement in the Legislature.

2012

On April 11, the Commission took part in a vigil raising awareness for LB 599, the Prenatal Care Bill. The Commission supported LB 599 since it will benefit all pregnant women, including Latinas.

2015

On January 21st, a press conference was held at the Capitol Rotunda where Senator Nordquist announced the introduction of a Bill to grant driver’s licenses to DACA beneficiaries. Several organizations were present, including the Commission.

2017

Adriana Carvajal-Rodriguez and Adolfo “Danny” Reynaga were appointed by the Governor as Commissioners in 2017.

Executive Director Dr. Arturo Spindola expressed his support in the name of the Commission to DACA. He said DACA beneficiaries bring about $80 billion to the US economy every year. This means that morally, economically, and legally there is justification for this program. He said the Commission would keep educating the public about the facts that DACA individuals bring into this country.
In 2020, COVID-19 was everywhere. Its spread and impact led to a global crisis of unprecedented proportions. Nebraska was no exception. The pandemic disrupted most legislative activities. The Nebraska Commission on Latino Americans had to change how business was handled. The staff elecommuted, but there was still one staff present at the office on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Director Spindola and Governor Pete Ricketts provided information in Spanish during the governor’s weekly press conferences in regards to the pandemic.

COVID-19 also affected the way we communicated with our constituents. In the “screenshot,” Nebraska Hispanic of Chamber Commerce members and partners in Madison and Grand Island, with Dr. Lazaro Spindola communicating via zoom.

In one of our 2021 Quarterly Meetings, the commissioners visited Latino businesses in Hastings, Nebraska.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the meat packing plants were the first places to experience COVID-19 outbreaks. The Commission through our Executive Director, joined other organizations to demand protection for essential workers during the crisis. Hand sanitizers, dividers to enhance social distance, use of masks, and more measures to reduce the risk among these vulnerable populations. Former Public information officer Victoria Morehead, attended a community rally in support of meatpacking workers.

Director Spindola expressed that LR 292-CA is a constitutional amendment to require verification of identity before voting introduced by La Grone. The Commission has been opposing this type of legislation for the last 12 years. Director Spindola stated that voter fraud is a non-existing problem in Nebraska and will lead to disenfranchising voters.
In 2022, the Governor of Nebraska, Pete Ricketts, commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Commission on Latino Americans by signing a proclamation at the Governor’s Courthouse located at the State Capitol in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Governor Pete Ricketts proclaimed July 26th as Dr. Hector P. Garcia Day, urging all Nebraskans to note the observance and educate themselves and others about the legacy of Dr. Hector P. Garcia.

Commissioners and staff were part of the Beam Signing ceremony at the Columbus Fieldhouse, a Columbus Community Hospital project.

In an effort to support entrepreneurship and Latino small businesses, Chair Yesenia Peck and Vice-chair Aida Evans were part of the ribbon-cutting ceremony of "Limon con Chile" a new restaurant in Grand Island.

Because of our 50th anniversary, the Nebraska Commission on Latino Americans is interviewing former commissioners with the purpose to highlight their service to our organization.

Dr. Lazaro Spindola, who served as the Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Latino Americans for 11 years, retired on December 31st, 2021.

He served as an external consultant providing training to the current staff until May of 2022.