



## The Department of Labor... Improving Working Conditions and Increasing Employment Opportunities for Latino Workers and their Families

When President Obama took office, the country was in the midst of a recession, shedding eight million jobs. For Latinos, the economic difficulties were more challenging as Latino unemployment rates started to rise earlier than for nation as a whole. Immediately, President Obama and Labor Secretary Solis began work on creating an economic recovery for all Americans. The Department remains committed to improving the welfare of Latino workers and their families, working to ensure that all communities, including Latinos, have access to good jobs. The following is a sample of investments and activities of Secretary Solis and the Department – activities that demonstrate a strong commitment to improving working conditions and increasing employment opportunities for Latino workers and their families.

- **Reaching Latino Workers:** Secretary Solis has met personally with Latino workers and their families across the country. This includes farm workers in Immokalee, Florida, fishermen in the Gulf Coast, hotel, restaurant and construction workers in Nevada, injured workers in Houston, Texas, and youth in Puerto Rico. And she has hosted events to recognize Latino workers on Cesar Chavez Day, encouraged Latino youth to pursue math and science careers, and engaged Latino leaders on health care and economic recovery across the country.
- **Making Investments in Latino Communities:** DOL has invested millions of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) and regular appropriated dollars in every state in the nation. The following represents the investments made in states with the largest Latino populations in the United States. In addition, DOL has invested more than \$102.3 million in **Puerto Rico**.

State	DOL Investment (millions)
California	\$721+
Texas	\$276.5+
Florida	\$210.2+
New York	\$662.2+
Illinois	\$519.4+
Arizona	\$67.2+
New Jersey	\$303.6+
Colorado	\$182.7+
New Mexico	\$36.2+
Georgia	\$355+

- **Training Latinos to Succeed in a Clean Energy Economy:** Ensuring Latinos are trained to succeed in a clean energy economy is critical. The Department recently awarded the

following grants competitions designed to advance training and employment in these industries.

- “Pathways Out of Poverty” grants provided \$150 million to support programs that help disadvantaged populations find ways out of poverty and into economic self-sufficiency through employment in energy efficiency and renewable energy industries. Recipients of these funds include NCLR, which is investing \$3 million in Chicago, San Jose and San Diego, including a focus on individuals with limited English proficiency; East Harlem Employment Services, which is investing \$4.7 million in training and will place more than 880 people in unsubsidized employment; and, the PathStone Corporation which is investing \$8 million to train workers in areas including Puerto Rico.
- “Energy Training Partnership” grants provided \$100 million for job training in clean energy industries, as authorized by the Recovery Act. Out of the \$100 million, approximately \$50 million went to benefit communities of color to provide training for workers in high growth and emerging green energy sectors.
- **Improving Employment Opportunities for Latino Youth:** Programs such as the Department’s Job Corps and Youth-Build programs are intended to provide job training and educational opportunities for low-income or at-risk youth ages 16 to 24. There are 2,366 Latinos enrolled in YouthBuild and 7,927 Latinos enrolled in Job Corps, representing more than 18 percent of participants in each program. More than 57 percent of Latino youth separating from Job Corps in program year 2009 were graduates – more than two percent higher than the national graduate rate.
- **Restoring Worker Protection Agencies’ Staffing Levels:** The Department made significant progress in bringing worker protection agencies’ staffing levels to 2001 levels and hired 710 enforcement personnel. Over 100 of these investigators have been brought on in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and over 250 in the Wage and Hour Division, helping to empower workers with information about their rights and enforcing the very laws that were written to protect them from employers who do not play by the rules.
- **U Visas – A Law Enforcement Tool:** In March the Department announced it will begin to exercise its authority to certify applications for U Nonimmigrant Status Visas (U visas). These visas are designed to help victims of qualifying criminal activities who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse and are willing to assist law enforcement or other government officials in the investigation or prosecution of those crimes. Clear protocols regarding the identification of qualifying criminal activities and the certification of U visa applications will be available in mid-summer. Certifications will begin this year.
- **New Protections for Farm Workers and their Families:** The Department published new H-2A regulations which significantly strengthen worker protections for H-2A workers and for domestic workers performing the same work along side H-2A workers. The new regulations return to the certification process for assuring that employers have met the requirements for obtaining H-2A workers, and provide enhanced enforcement tools for the Department, including debarment authority for the Wage and Hour Division and an increased bonding

requirement for labor contractors. The Department is committed to a more robust legal regime that creates even safer and healthier workplaces for youth employed in agriculture. It is exploring additional regulatory changes to further bolster protections for children in the fields. The Secretary is seeking to collaborate with Congress to address the protection gap in U.S. law for agricultural child labor and on May 19, 2010 announced the Department is turning its attention to regulatory action on child labor in agriculture.

- **Increasing Education and Outreach:** In February, 2010 the Occupational Safety and Health Administration conducted “OSHA listens,” a public meeting to solicit comments and suggestions from its stakeholders on key issues facing the agency and the Wage and Hour Administration held a listening session on May 21, 2010. In April 2010, the Department launched the “We Can Help” nationwide campaign, an effort spearheaded by the Department’s Wage and Hour Division. This campaign connects America’s most vulnerable and low-wage workers with the broad array of services offered by the Department.
- **The National Action Summit for Latino Worker Health and Safety:** In April 2010, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration brought together nearly 1,000 participants to the National Action Summit for Latino Worker Health and Safety in Houston, Texas. The participants included farm workers, community- and faith-based groups, medical clinics, government representatives, employers and unions. The goal of the summit was to reduce injuries, illnesses and fatalities among Latino workers by enhancing knowledge of their workplace rights and improving their ability to exercise those rights. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is forging new partnerships and collaborations with community organizations to enhance workers ability to exercise their rights.
- **Worker Protection and Gulf Coast Oil Spill Cleanup:** Over 30 staff from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration are deployed throughout the Gulf coast to monitor the safety and health of oil spill clean-up workers. Staff is auditing training sessions, conducting air monitoring for hazardous chemicals and have made over 1600 site visits to ensure that BP meets its obligations to protect all workers involved in the shoreline cleanup. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration published worker safety educational materials in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese and is distributing thousands of copies to employees involved with the oil spill cleanup along the Gulf Cost. The materials supplement the required training that employees must receive before they can engage in cleanup activities. The Wage and Hour Division has also mobilized its workforce to address concerns related to volunteering, training time, and other compensation-related issues. Wage and Hour Division has arranged to meet with workers and their advocates to ensure that those working in the area understand their rights and the remedies available to them in exercising those rights. Wage and Hour Division staff is distributing “We Can Help” materials in a variety of venues.
- **Increasing Wages for Workers:** In 2009, the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour went into effect, benefiting three to five million workers. In 2008, over 15 percent of workers who earned at or below the minimum wage were Latino.

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