



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 the nation as a whole. Immediately, President Obama and Labor Secretary Solis began work on creating an economic recovery for all Americans, and to ensure that all communities, including Latinos, have access to good jobs.

The following is a sample of investments and activities by Secretary Solis and the Department of Labor – 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 from its budget and from funds provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) to assist, train and improve health and safety for workers in every state in the nation, including the states with the largest Latino populations such as California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, Colorado, New Mexico and Georgia. In addition, DOL has invested more than \$200 million in Puerto Rico. This includes an \$8 million grant to PathStone Corporation to train workers for employment in the clean energy economy in areas including Puerto Rico, and a \$4 million National Emergency Grant to assist severe storm recovery efforts in the wake of Tropical Storm Otto.
- **Connecting Latino Adults to Employment Opportunities, Services and Training:** The Department has several programs connecting Latino adults to employment opportunities, services and training.
 - Between July 2009 and June 2010, more than 3.2 million participants served by the Department's Wagner Peyser program were Latino. This figure represents nearly 15 percent of total participants served by this program. Nearly 1.4 million Latino participants, more than 40 percent, received some type of staff-assisted service and 687,981 Latinos entered employment.
 - As of September 30, 2010, 18,986 Latinos have been served by the Department's Community Based Job Training grants and 9,212 Latinos have been served through the Department's High Growth and Emerging Industry grants.
 - Between October 2009 and September 2010, 2,035 Latino workers impacted by trade were served by the Department's Trade Adjustment Assistance program. Of those who left the program during this period, 57 percent entered employment – a level which is in keeping with the overall entered employment rate for all who exited the program during the same period. Of these, 84 percent retained employment for multiple quarters.





- The National Farmworker Jobs Program provides funding to community-based organizations and public agencies to assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families attain greater economic stability. Between July 2009 and June 2010, 10,487 of the 13,348 individuals who exited the program after receiving core, intensive, and training services were Latino.
- **Improving Employment Opportunities for Latino Youth:** The Department is investing significantly in employment opportunities for Latino youth.
 - As of September, 2010, more than 107,000 (or 27 percent) of youth served by the Recovery Act's Workforce Investment Act youth funds were Latino. Between July 2009 and June 2010, 28 percent of youth served by the Department's non-Recovery Act Workforce Investment Act youth programs were Latino.
 - Programs such as the Department's Job Corps and Youth-Build are intended to provide job training and educational opportunities for low-income or at-risk youth ages 16 to 24. There are 1,246 Latino youth enrolled in Youth-Build, and 10,122 Latino youth were served through Job Corps between July 2009 and June 2010, representing nearly 20 percent of participants served in each program. Nearly 60 percent of Latino youth separating from Job Corps in program year 2009 were graduates – more than two percent higher than the national graduate rate.
- **Training Latinos to Succeed in a Clean Energy Economy:** Ensuring Latinos are trained to succeed in a clean energy economy is critical. The Department awarded Recovery Act grants to advance training and employment in these industries and to ensure Latinos receive needed training. For example, "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. 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. "Energy Training Partnership" grants also 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.
- **The National Action Summit for Latino Worker Health and Safety: Latino workers suffer and die on the job at a greater rate while doing the hardest, most unhealthy, most dangerous jobs.** 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 (OSHA) has followed up on this summit with a robust outreach effort, including regional meetings and direct engagement, forging new partnerships and collaborations with community organizations to enhance workers ability to exercise their rights. In November, 2010, OSHA co-hosted a Latino and immigrant worker safety and health summit in New York City which attracted more than 400 participants. It also issued a new rule to prevent the leading causes of fatalities involving cranes and derricks in construction that will affect approximately 4.8 million workers, preventing 22 fatalities and 175 serious injuries each year.
- **Promoting Cooperation in Protecting Rights for Mexican Workers:** On May 4, 2010, Secretary Solis and Arturo Sarukhan, Ambassador of the United Mexican States to the United States of America, signed a Joint



Declaration to work together to foster an environment in which workers' rights are respected, including to improve employer compliance with and worker awareness of workplace laws and regulations applicable to all Mexican workers in the United States. In June, 2010, leadership for the Department's Wage and Hour Administration and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration signed Letters of Agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico to ensure cooperation in protecting the rights of Mexican nationals who work in the United States.

- **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.
- **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. More than 100 of these investigators have been brought on in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and more than 300 have been brought on 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.
- **Increasing Education and Outreach:** 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. 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.
- **Worker Protection and Gulf Coast Oil Spill Cleanup:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration was an active member of the National Response Team from the outset of the oil spill response, and played a significant role in ensuring that BP and its contractors protected the safety and health of oil spill cleanup workers. More than 145 of its professionals were involved each day protecting workers throughout the Gulf on shore and on marine vessels conducting site visits, auditing training sessions, reviewing and documenting exposure assessments for hazardous chemicals. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration published worker safety educational materials in English, Spanish and Vietnamese and distributed tens of thousands of copies to employees involved with the oil spill cleanup. It also worked to ensure that training required for employees before engaging in cleanup activities was available to workers in their primary language. The Wage and Hour Division has also mobilized its workforce to address concerns related to volunteering, training time, and other compensation-related issues. The 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 and investigated allegations of violations related to Oil Spill cleanup work.



- **U Visas – A Law Enforcement Tool:** In 2010 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 are being developed.
- **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.

*** www.dol.gov ***

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