

**Immigrant Rights Commission  
Minutes of August 6, 1998**

The Immigrant Rights Commission meeting was held on Thursday August 6, 1998, in the Board of Supervisors Legislative Chambers at 401 Van Ness Avenue, Room 404 in San Francisco.

MEMBERS	Renata Ecarma	Fidel Jiminez	Nati Ramirez	Thou Ny
PRESENT	Marie Mallare	Renee Saucedo	Martin Schenker	
	Penelope Chronis	Philip Nguyen	Richard Ow	

MEMBERS ABSENT Anita Friedman, Lee Sprague, Samuel Assefa, Isabel Huie and Nam Thai

OTHERS PRESENT John Young, Immigration Special Assistant to the Executive Director of DHS  
Tonji Walker, Secretary, Department of Human Services  
Rini Chakraborty, Presenter, Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
Press representatives

ROLL CALL John Young called the meeting to order at 5:00pm, noting that the Commission was present with the exceptions of Anita Friedman, Lee Sprague, Samuel Assefa, Isabel Huie and Nam Thai.

AGENDA On motion by John Young, seconded and carried, the agenda was adopted as posted.

MINUTES On motion by Commissioner Schenker, seconded and carried, the Minutes of the July 2, 1998 meeting were adopted as circulated.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE On motion by Commissioner Schenker, seconded and carried, the Commission agreed to serve an interim term of 3 months for the chairperson and then have another vote.

On motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded and carried, the Commission agreed to one chairperson and one vice chair to act in the absence of the chairperson.

On motion by Commissioner Ow, seconded and carried, the Commission agreed to (four) 4 subcommittees: 1) Outreach and Education of Immigrant Access & Participation, 2) Policy and Legislation 3) Welfare Reform Education, 4) Naturalization. President Saucedo stated that she would present an outline of proposed committee functions for the Commission's consideration at the next meeting.

## **Immigrant Rights Commission Minutes of August 6, 1998**

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS** On nomination by Commissioner Ow, seconded and carried, Commissioner Saucedo was elected as President and Commissioner Mallare was elected Vice President.

**1996 FEDERAL WELFARE REFORM LAWS** Rini Chakraborty of the Coalition for Immigrant Rights presented an overview of the 1996 Federal Welfare Reform Law. She spoke of the barriers that immigrants face and their limited access to eligibility and language services. There was a handout and Ms. Chakraborty described the injustices done to undocumented immigrants and cited incidents showing a decrease in services for immigrants.

Ms. Chakraborty distributed a handout.

When Ms. Chakraborty was asked what concerns she has for San Francisco and the State, she noted that it would be very helpful if agencies would adopt the "Don't ask Don't Report Policy" and monitor access to services and prenatal care for immigrants.

**FOOD STAMPS** John Young reported the Commission that San Francisco has put money into food banks throughout San Francisco's immigrant districts. Food bank information was mailed with discontinuance notices. No I.D. is required to receive food from the food banks and culturally appropriate food is available at all food bank locations. The planned food stamp benefit program will extend to serve those aged 18 to 24 with some work requirements.

**SSI** John Young also reported that up to 25,000 immigrants may lose their SSI benefits nationwide. These individuals are "unqualified immigrants" as defined under the federal welfare reform act. Most of these individuals fall within a special immigration category "Permanently Residing Under Color of Law" (PRUCOL). Most of the San Francisco PRUCOL residents (about 180) fall within the following subcategories.

- Those who registered with INS before 1972 but did not follow through with their Green Card
- Temporary residence status
- Deferred departure

The State may adopt legislation to continue these individuals' SSI benefits.

## **IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION COMMITTEES**

At its August 6 meeting, the Immigrant Rights Commission voted to form four working committees: 1) Immigrant access and participation, 2) policy & legislation, 3) welfare; and 4) citizenship. The Commission formed the committees with the understanding that these could be dissolved, modified or added to by the Commission as needed.

The outreach/access/participation and policy/legislation committees are, for now, long-standing committees. The ongoing objectives of these two committees are to make sure that the Commission achieves its goals, as mandated by the city's administrative code (i.e. involve immigrants in the political process, maximize access to services, etc.) The other two committees deal with specific substantive issues impacting immigrants, welfare and citizenship. These committees will remain in place as long as the Commission deems necessary.

Generally, each committee's mission will be to discuss relevant issues and to bring information and recommendations to the Commission. **COMMITTEES WILL NOT MAKE MAJOR DECISIONS ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION. COMMITTEES WILL BRING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION AS A WHOLE FOR POSSIBLE ACTION.**

Each committee will contain at least one Commissioner. A committee chair selected by the Commission will head each committee. Committee members will consult with and seek advice from immigrants and experts as needed. Members from different committees are encouraged to communicate and strategize with each other around common and coordinated activities.

The general duties of the committees are as follows:

### **1. IMMIGRANT ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION**

The San Francisco Administrative Code, Section 5.201 requires the Immigrant Rights Commission, among other things, to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and Mayor on how to involve immigrants in local government. Furthermore, city law requires the Commission to make recommendations on how to improve city services to immigrants, and to prepare an annual report on services for immigrants. Finally, the Commission must "develop a plan for outreach to, and education of, the public to increase public awareness of the contributions made by immigrants..."

This committee will ensure that the above tasks are carried out. Committee members will develop a plan on how to involve immigrants in local government. Ideas could include community hearings, city-sponsored events, etc. The committee could study how certain immigrant communities are most excluded from local government and ways to address this. Committee members could develop a method to evaluate increased participation.

Similarly, the committee could investigate the status of services to immigrants and prepare recommendations to make it better. While committee members would not have to be the authors of the report, they would be responsible for ensuring its preparation.

Finally, committee members will be responsible for developing ways to bring issues of immigrant rights out in the forefront. The committee could develop a media plan, work with various CBO's, etc.

### **2. POLICY & LEGISLATION**

This committee will be in charge of three main tasks: 1) to convert any Commission recommendation into written policy proposals or legislation, 2) to track and monitor state and federal legislation and policy related to immigrants, and 3) to make sure that immigrants' concerns

and interests are turned into policy or legislative recommendations to the city. By law, the Immigrant Rights Commission has the duty to accomplish all these tasks.

Committee members will not have to personally perform the above tasks. As with all of the committees, members will set priorities, evaluate information and determine what should be brought to the Commission. Committee members may choose to delegate the more work-intensive items to commission staff, contractors, etc.

### **3. WELFARE**

This committee will be responsible for understanding the impacts of Welfare Reform on San Francisco's immigrants and for making recommendations to the Commission on plans of action. The committee could focus on one area of benefits or could address many. For example, the committee could focus on healthcare to immigrants, or it may decide to tackle food stamps, SSI and other benefits as well. With the assistance of providers, consumers, advocates and others, the committee could develop a list of recommendations and a plan for implementation.

### **4. CITIZENSHIP**

This committee will work on ensuring that San Francisco's immigrants are able to naturalize as quickly and effectively as possible. The committee will work with other bodies already performing work around citizenship; including the San Francisco Naturalization Collaborative. Committee members could join other advocacy efforts by arranging meetings with the INS.

### **SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. How do we ensure the active involvement of immigrants in the Commission's committee work?
2. How can we best utilize the input and expertise of non-commission members within the committee work?