

**Virginia Latino Advisory Board Meeting**  
**Friday - February 22, 2019 10:00am-3:00pm**  
**Patrick Henry Building**  
**1111 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219**

**DRAFT: Minutes for Approval**

**In Attendance** Edgar Aranda, Cecilia Barbosa (Chair), Paul Berry, Damien Cabezas, Karina Kline-Gabel (Secretary), Melody Gonzales, J. Michael Martinez, Aida Pacheco, Sergio Rimola, Vivian Sanchez-Jones, Ana Solorio, Cecilia Williams, Jorge Yinat

**Not in Attendance** Victoria Cartagena, Eugene Chigna, Juan Espinoza, Edgar Lara, Carmen Romero, Gloria Maria Peña Rockhold

**Staff & Counsel** Justin Bell - Assistant Attorney General, Maribel Castañeda - Staff Liaison, Fernando Mercado-Violand - Director of Latino Outreach

**Call to Order** Cecilia Barbosa called meeting to order at 10:15am. Quorum met.

**Welcome**

Cecilia Barbosa welcomed VLAB members and gave an overview of the meeting. The priority of the work for this meeting is to focus on finalizing the VLAB report to the Governor. Jorge Yinat questioned if the report needed to be voted on today and Cecilia Barbosa said the vote could be tabled until the next meeting, if the board chooses to do so during that agenda topic.

**Public Comment** No public comment.

**Consideration of Previous Minutes 12/14/2018**

Aida Pacheco moved to approve minutes, seconded by Sergio Rimola. Motion passed unanimously.

**Legislative Report - Maribel Castañeda, Staff Liaison**

Maribel Castañeda briefed the the board on the following topics:



**Board Members**

Aida Pacheco | Ana Solorio | Carmen Romero | Cecilia Barbosa | Cecilia Williams | Damien Cabezas | Edgar Aranda-Yanoc | Edgar Lara | Eugene Chigna | Gloria Maria Peña Rockhold  
J. Michael Martinez de Andino | Jorge Yinat | Juan Espinoza | Karina Kline-Gabel | Melody Gonzales | Paul Berry | Sergio Rimola | Victoria Cartagena | Vivian Sanchez-Jones

- General Assembly: Maribel Castañeda continues to track bills before the General Assembly closes and will send an update to board members of what bills have and haven't passed.
  - Cecilia Barbosa asked about the budget and when the General Assembly final decision will be. Maribel responded by the end of February.
- Civic Engagement: The Governor announced the redesign and expansion of the Office of Constituent Services and Community Engagement. This will allow his administration to better serve communities in Virginia such as members of the LGBTQ community, Pacific Islanders, women, and African Americans. There will be a director assigned to each of these groups in the hope that this reorganization will help these communities become more engaged in state government.
- 2020 Census: Funds for the Census (\$1.5 million) were removed from the budget so there will be some new strategizing on the best way to find funding and move forward by the appointed commission. VLAB board member, Aida Pacheco is on the Complete Count Commission.
- Boards and appointments: This is the slower time of the season so applicants should be encouraged to apply now. Maribel is in charge of this effort and hopes that we can increase the number of Latino appointees. From December 1, 2017 to November 30, 2018, the Governor made 818 appointments. Included in those appointments are 4.65% who identified as Latino or 38 individuals.
- The Governor has announced that he has restored rights to 10,992 Virginians during the first year of his administration.
- Health: More than 200,000 people have signed up for Medicaid expansion. Fernando Mercado-Violand and Deputy Secretary Marvin Figueroa led strong outreach on this as well as educating the public on the expansion of Medicaid.
- Housing: Governor Northam proposed an amendment in the 2018-2020 biennial budget to add \$19 million to the Housing Trust Fund to reduce homelessness and address rising housing costs. If approved, these funds will be used also for issues of eviction.
- Business: Unemployment in Virginia fell to 2.8%, well below the 3.7% national rate.
- Education: Efforts have been made to increase the number of counselors in schools. The Governor's proposed amendment in the 2018-2020 biennial budget would add \$36 million to start reducing the ratio of counselors to students from 1 to 425 to 1 to 250 students.
- Governor's Fellowship Program: Selected applicants to this program will receive practical experience in state government through this fellowship in Richmond or Washington, DC. Fellows meet Secretaries and get an in- depth look at how their state government works. Applications are due by March 15, 2019. Juniors and seniors in college are main applicants although graduate students may apply as well.
  - Aida Pacheco recommends that there should be a description of the program on the VLAB website and that radio stations should be contacted to announce it.
  - Mike Martinez suggested that the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce could be an important point of contact.
  - Fernando Mercado-Violand will send out a description of the program to the Board.

- Melody Gonzales addressed the topic of paying interns since socioeconomic disadvantaged students may keep our diverse students from applying to such programs.
- Karina Kline-Gabel suggested a map be created showing where the fellows have traditionally come from and highlight areas where we need representation.
- Paul Berry added that the data we share with a map should also include the disciplines of the previous fellows.
- Jorge requested access to data to better understand the demographic composition of government positions and the unemployment rate of the Latino population.

### **Comments from First Lady Pamela Northam**

First Lady Pamela Northam made a surprise visit to the board meeting and addressed the Board on the importance that immigrants have made in our country and state. The First Lady also spoke on the importance of early education: all children need to have the same opportunities to succeed and become good citizens.

- Aida Pacheco thanked her for the hiring of the first Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity who is Latino.
- The First Lady mentioned the two thousand mile listening tour that the administration has created in order to listen to what Virginians need across the Commonwealth. She also called attention to this administration having the most diverse cabinet ever but acknowledged more needs to be done.
- Paul Berry agreed on the importance of addressing non-pedagogical standards by the administration, including the emotional needs of children. The First Lady added that many members of the immigrant community are in trauma when they arrive to this country and we have to address this challenge by assuring that they have help from school counselors and allowing the teachers to focus on teaching.
- Aida Pacheco asked if the \$36 million set aside for education will also be used to recruit diverse teaching personnel.
  - The First Lady agreed that students need to see teachers with similar backgrounds and that the success of teacher recruitment is related to better pay for teachers.
- Melody Gonzales thanked the First Lady for joining the teachers at the recent rally and mentioned the disparities that exist in the education field.

The First Lady ended her remarks by thanking Fernando Mercado-Violand and Maribel Castañeda for all of their work in the cabinet.

### **Comments from Governor Northam**

Governor Northam also spoke to the Board during an unannounced visit. He began his comments by addressing the difficulty he and his administration have confronted in the last few weeks and sincerely wanted to share that he regrets his past actions. The Governor wanted the Board to know that the pictures from his past are not indicative of who he currently is. He hopes to use this opportunity to learn and listen and bring a new level of awareness to Virginia and our country. In the next three years the Governor hopes to dedicate his time and efforts to reconciling the deep issues of inequity in our state that have existed for the past 400 years. To do this, he asked for our recommendations to policy makers. His closing remarks ended with

acknowledgement that there is more work to be done for our state during his administration. Although health care access has improved for Virginians, maternal mortality rates are increasing, opportunities are still not available for all communities, and voting access still deals with inequity issues. Governor Northam reminded us that his administration's doors are open and willing to hear from all, but especially those that are closest to the pain seen in their communities. He encouraged us to seek friends or colleagues, who want to share expertise, to apply to be on boards in an effort to bring good from what has happened.

- Paul Berry thanked the Governor for his remarks and addressed the ERA vote: How can we proceed in the next 3 years?
  - The Governor responded that although the votes were there, the House did not allow it to come up for a vote. He encouraged us to focus on the upcoming election in November and find voices that represent the will of the majority of the Commonwealth.
- Jorge Yinat asked the Governor how we as a board could help to bring value back to the current administration.
  - The Governor has charged the Secretaries to address the inequities that we currently see and he is dedicated to do everything possible at the executive level.
- Mike Martinez asked about the increase in the Housing Trust Fund and encouraged the Governor to continue to increase that funding.
- Edgar Aranda made a request to the Governor to please sign any measures or bills that protect immigrants in the Commonwealth.
  - The Governor responded by telling the Board that he is actively working on ways to make community college more affordable for all student communities.
- Aida Pacheco suggested that there be a training for all state government employees and elected officials on cultural competency.
  - The Governor responded positively to this suggestion and added that in addition to training for adults, there also has to be ways we can allow our children to reflect on these issues as well.
- Damien Cabezas applauded the Governor's achievements so far and expressed gratitude for the recent Medicaid expansion, affirming that more people are getting medications and preventative wellness check-ups due to this change.
- Sergio Rimola, speaking as a physician, would like to see more diversity in the healthcare fields. He also addressed the 40 quarter requirement that Virginia has for Medicaid eligibility and encouraged the administration to eliminate that requirement.
  - The Governor affirmed that he would study the requirement.

Cecilia Barbosa thanked Governor Northam for coming to the meeting and echoed the board's appreciation of his sincerity. The Board looks forward to presenting its recommendations to the Governor and explore how we can work together to advance them.

### **Latino Outreach Report - Fernando Mercado-Violand, Special Assistant and Director of Latino Outreach**

Fernando Mercado-Violand gave an overview of the restructuring of the Office of Constituent Services and described how the Office is implementing a new outreach program of quarterly office hours around the state as a collaboration among the LGBTQ, African American, Asian, Latino, and women's issues directors. This forward-facing effort is an attempt to bring

government to the people instead of everyone coming to Richmond. Another important project in the office is staffing for the Census 2020. Despite the lack of funding, the VA Complete Count Commission for the Census 2020 is planning to be a hub for information and networking and will inform communities on the importance of the census.

- Edgar Aranda hopes the Commission helps get the word out to various parts of the state such as Roanoke where there is a great need for more Latino representation and outreach.
- Aida believes there will be about 6 regional offices established and recommended that Board members enlist other leaders from their respective areas to plan and deliver Community forums to align with the designated regions to educate and engage the Latino Community on 2020 Census. She added that the Governor's staff will produce a community toolkit.
- Paul Berry affirmed that it's important to think creatively on communicating with different communities that may feel marginalized. He recommended there could be Census 2020 ambassadorship opportunities.
- Karina Kline-Gabel suggested that members of the board be individually called upon to serve as leaders in their communities and help with communicating Census 2020 information.
- Melody Gonzales asked about the office hours: Would Mr. Mercado-Violand be able to create a database of contacts of the constituents he meets during the office hours? With the negative headlines, what is the impact on the office hours initiative?
- Jorge Yinat asked Fernando to let everyone know the vision and office hours for the outreach so that VLAB members can help promote the outreach.
- Vivian Sanchez asked where the community office hours would be held.
  - Fernando will be in Northern Virginia and another representative will go to the southwestern region of Virginia. Because the Office of Community Engagement and Constituent Services is a small office, there are limited boots on the ground.

In closing, Fernando Mercado-Violand said that it's been a challenging couple of weeks. Everyone is trying to focus on the feedback from constituents so that it can be shared with the Governor. Although the timing of the roll-out of office hours was difficult due to the turmoil in the administration, the plan is to begin the program in early spring. Fernando will email the Board details on the office hours as they are finalized.

### **Overview on Policy Development**

The Governor's Policy Director, Jennie O'Holleran from the Division of Legislative Services, addressed how the Board can advance its recommendations with support of her office. This office focuses on the following:

1. Advising the Governor on policy positions - legislative and otherwise - also helping the Governor develop his policy agenda.
2. Addressing policy cross/intersectional issues.
3. Reviewing every single policy effort or executive order idea, then making recommendations to the Governor.
4. Pursuing the Governor's agenda by executive action and legislative action:
  - a. Executive Order and directives (directing agencies to do something)
  - b. Power of persuasion
  - c. Bills and budget - the major tools to accomplish initiatives
5. Structuring recommendations

- a. What can we do through executive action?
- b. What are some legislative items we should consider pursuing?
- c. What budget items should we consider?
- d. What are some things that can be siloed to certain cabinet secretaries?
- Cecilia Barbosa asked about timing of recommendations for the legislative session:
  - Jennie O'Holleran responded that the legislation session wraps up on February 23 and in the next 6 weeks they begin thinking about the next session. The best times for recommendations on bills and budget requests is in the summer. In the early fall, there is more focus on executive actions.
- Jorge Yinat requested clarity on the review process: Could the Policy Office offer us help in reviewing our recommendations?
  - The office collects information, processes it, and develops recommendations. She would ask for guidance from cabinets.
- Paul Berry asked about the staffing of the office
  - There are six office staff who come from different disciplines (i.e., campaign, lobbying backgrounds, governor's fellows).
- Melody Gonzales thanked Jennie O'Holleran for coming and asked if she had an example of an executive action.
- Jorge Yinat suggested forming a repository of executive actions as a resource for board members that VLAB consider the establishment of a permanent standing policy committee to work with the administration's director of policy to facilitate initiatives developed by VLAB.
  - Jennie O'Holleran said she would be glad to think about a repository and would work with Fernando Mercado-Violand and Maribel Castañeda on examples of executive action. Many executive orders impact state employees and agencies (eg. last spring paid parental leave for all state employees; developing a coastal resiliency plan/state owned building)
- Cecilia Barbosa echoed the board's desire to work with this Office on advancing VLAB recommendations and thanked her for coming to the meeting. She also asked if there was a particular format for recommendations.
  - Jennie O'Holleran suggested a narrative followed by recommendations would be the best format. She offered an example: the [JLARC reports](#).

### **Report from Secretary Thomassen**

The Secretary communicated her appreciation for all the work done by VLAB and echoed Maribel Castañeda's request to help spread the word about board appointments to our communities. There are 300 boards and, although VLAB is an important one (27 applicants in 2018), we need to also fill board openings for other boards. In addition to board appointments, her office has also been in charge of the restoration of rights, clemency, and the upcoming Census 2020. In regard to the Census, the Commission on the Census 2020 will continue to work with her office to focus on education and motivation for census participation so that Virginia receives the resources it needs for the next 10 years.

- Melody Gonzales referenced the Governor's visit to today's meeting and asked how VLAB can help the Secretary's office unite the diverse voices of the boards.

- The Secretary responded that her office has been talking about affinity groups within government (caucuses of constituents that get together socially with like-minded background). She said she would support social events of affinity groups.
- Karina Kline-Gabel mentioned the need for visuals of Latinos working on boards as helpful tool for marketing to those communities, especially for Census 2020 outreach and other board appointments.
  - The Secretary affirmed the need to see people who represent different communities.
  - Ana Solorio asked if there had been an event bringing board members together and the Secretary did not believe there had been any.
- Cecilia Barbosa affirmed the importance of looking at recommendations that are common to several boards.
- Jorge Yinat asked about eliminating the limit of four VLAB meetings per year and the possibility to have a budget item to help VLAB expand its outreach to the community.
  - Mike Martinez responded that other advisory boards do not have limits to the number of annual meetings (i.e., Asian Advisory Board meets more than VLAB) and suggested removing the limitation.
  - The Secretary will look into these suggestions. She noted that the General Assembly has authorized an African American Advisory Board to commence on July 1, 2019.
- Aida Pacheco asked about the increase in the percentage of Latinos appointed to state boards and asked for a realistic percentage to target between now and the end of his administration.

### **Report by Ad Hoc Governance Committee**

The committee, consisting of Mike Martinez, Aida Pacheco, Gloria Rockhold, and Cecilia Williams, developed the nomination protocol and reviewed the bylaws. Mike Martinez reiterated that VLAB is the only board that is limited to four meetings a year and VLAB members would want to be reimbursed for those additional meetings as well.

Aida Pacheco reported that all VLAB board members are qualified and vetted to run for board office positions. The committee recommends that a member can be nominated for office as long as that person had only one excused absence in the past year. Vivian Sánchez suggested that meeting absences be categorized as excused or unexcused.

The committee also addressed the Board voting procedure. Members of the Board asked and discussed if electronic voting was an option.

- Special Counsel, Justin Bell explained that the voting method was primarily about accessibility to the public (more important is how that information is preserved and stored) and the code specifically prohibits written ballots. He recommended asking each member, one by one, for their vote at board meetings and that the votes be documented by Maribel Castañeda.
- Melody Gonzales asked about voting procedures of other boards.
- Special Counsel, Justin Bell reminded the Board that state boards are advisory or regulatory, and they don't make policy. Regulatory boards amend regulations but advisory boards do not. Maribel Castañeda will check the voting procedures of

three other advisory boards including the Israeli Advisory Board, the Women's Council, and the Asian Advisory board.

Cecilia Barbosa suggested that if Board members needed more time to look over the information, the Board could table the vote on the committee's recommendations for the next meeting. In the meantime, Board members should provide changes to the recommended policy and by-laws by mid-March to Maribel Castañeda.

### **Board Officer Elections**

Cecilia Barbosa asked the Ad-Hoc Governance Committee to preside over the Board officer elections. She recognized the tremendous amount of energy and leadership on our Board and requested unity regardless of which candidates are chosen.

On behalf of the Ad-Hoc Governance Committee, Aida Pacheco executed the election process and announced the candidates.

Chair: Nominees were Jorge Yinat and Cecilia Barbosa. There were 4 votes in favor of Jorge Yinat and 9 votes in favor of Cecilia Barbosa.

Vice Chair: Nominee was Karina Kline-Gabel. There were 13 votes in favor of Karina Kline-Gabel.

Secretary: Nominees were Paul Berry and Melody Gonzales. There were 9 votes in favor of Paul Berry and 4 votes in favor of Melody Gonzales.

The new officers for 2019-2020 are Cecilia Barbosa, Chair; Karina Kline-Gabel, Vice-Chair; and Paul Berry, Secretary.

Special Counsel, Justin Bell, reiterated the Chair's comments on the caliber of Board members and added that he has been very happy to support VLAB due to the passion and genuineness for the work he sees from Board members. Justin Bell wanted to renew his pledge to help in anyway possible despite the chance that he may be moved to another board in the coming year. Cecilia thanked Justin Bell for his support of the Board.

### **Special Visit from State Representatives**

Upon the adjournment of the VA General Assembly session, Delegate Elizabeth Guzmán and Delegate Alfonso López visited the VLAB meeting unannounced to communicate their commitment to continue to fight and follow the lead and guidance of the Board, despite the losses in bills for in-state tuition, driver's cards, and controls on the reach of ICE. Both Delegates reiterated the Governor's statement that the recommendations of the VLAB report are taken seriously. The Delegates also reminded the Board that a Virginia Latino Caucus was created in 2018, but there is still a great need to add more representatives from the Latino community. VLAB Board members were encouraged to run for General Assembly seats or help others to do so. Delegate Guzmán mentioned the need to focus on the next session and address issues that impact our community like access to preschool education, a program that many localities do not take advantage of because they don't want to match the funds.

### **Annual Report Vote**

Cecilia Barbosa asked the Board if there any changes to the annual report. She also reminded the Board that the annual report is a "living document" that can be continually edited and updated. She would like to be sure that all Board members are comfortable signing off on the current content.

- Maribel Castañeda suggested that the report could be called 2018 - Present with an addendum this summer, if necessary.
- Melody Gonzales brought up the timeline since the 2018 title would not include important issues that occurred at the beginning of 2019. Melody Gonzales also recommended that more time be invested in looking at how the data was presented in the report: Could the report have a more positive proactive stance?
- Cecilia Barbosa suggested that she and Melody Gonzales rephrase the letter in the report to create that tone.
- Mike Martinez said the annual report will be on recommendations but that the letter is a way to separate the human aspect that will be shared with the executive branch.
- Mike Martinez added that many of the topics that are in this report did not pass in the current General Assembly.
- Edgar Aranda echoed Melody's remarks on the report looking more positive and that a report issued in the summer would be more appropriate and focused on the 2020 session.
- Jorge Yinat suggested that the Board needs to create a strategic voice as we go forward and include the media or outsiders in our communications.
  - Special Counsel, Justin Bell responded that there are existing media policies and that those would be shared at our next meeting.

Cecilia Barbosa made a motion to finalize the report by March 15, 2019 by amending statistics, adjusting recommendations based on the outcomes of this General Assembly, and adding a recommendation on Census 2020. A letter will also be drafted that reflects the tone of the government as well as updating the data overview section. Karina Kline-Gabel seconded the motion. Motion passed with one opposing vote from Edgar Aranda.

To finalize the report, the following dates are provided:

- March 1 - finalize new data/wording
- March 8 - March 15 - Final internal VLAB review

Special Counsel, Justin Bell, suggested adding a check off sheet at the end of the document stating that revisions have been completed.

### **New Business:**

Ana mentioned that a member of the VAAB board had reached out to her about addressing the Virginia Asian Advisory Board. She would like to invite the chair of that board to the next VLAB meeting. Cecilia Barbosa stated that she attended the last VAAB meeting and that there was a proposal to issue a joint statement from VAAB, the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and VLAB regarding the climate of the administration.

**Adjournment** Meeting was adjourned at 3:01pm.

**Next Meeting Dates**

April 12, 2019 8:45am-1:45pm Harrisonburg, VA (JMU Student Success Center)

For Special Lodging rate (\$94.00) April 11-12, 2019 please call Hotel Madison 540-564-0200 or book online at [www.hotelmadison.com](http://www.hotelmadison.com) and select the Special Government Rate category. The hotel is next to our meeting space and the parking deck.

June 14 2019 Hampton Roads VA

Sept Richmond (TBA)

Dec 13 2019 NOVA (TBA)