



DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY

PRESS RELEASE

March 12, 2009

Media Contact: Clarissa Mendez 703-631-0650

DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY HIGHLIGHTS EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE IN 2009 PUBLIC POLICY FORUM:

WASHINGTON, D.C. March 6, 2009 — Dialogue on Diversity, in its 2009 Public Policy Forum, *A Bracing Climate: New Breezes on the Potomac*, held Thursday, March 5 in the Rayburn Building's Gold Room, offered its characteristic lineup of top-flight panelists in a series of seminars on several salient policy areas, led by the all important imperatives of education policy, alongside segments on economics, IT, and the perennially daunting puzzle of immigration reform.

The theme was sounded by Dialogue president **Ma. Cristina Caballero**, opening the morning session with a brisk overview, driving home the fiscal policy mantra that underlay all the varied policy discourse to come – stimulus by the rule of the three Ts – “Timely, Targeted, and Temporary – the magical incantation that is easier to say than to effect, as the Congress has sufficiently proved,” she remarked.

Highlighting the midday session's education panel, **Rep. Rubén Hinojosa**, Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee's important Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, described model schools as beacons showing the route to educational success. His experience with the challenges of American education go back to his pre-Congressional days when he was the only Hispanic member of the state school board in Texas. Rep. Hinojosa's concern for the acute urgency of the education topic in the current national policy picture – a concern forcefully echoed by the new President in his recent statements – is underlined by his making time for the Dialogue roundtable in the midst of an extraordinarily crowded Congressional schedule. This is Rep. Hinojosa's fourth appearance at Dialogue on Diversity Forums on the education topic.

The education panel additionally brought together **Maria Neira**, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers, **Maria Tukeva**, principal of the high-achieving Bell Multicultural High School in the District of Columbia, **Alma Morales-Riojas**, President of MANA. **Maria Tukeva**, a D.C. Public Schools principal, offered an overview of her achievement in taking a school in a neighborhood of immigrant children, from the poorest homes, those least acculturated to the rhythms of U.S. urban life, and producing 97% high school graduation rates and similar on-to-college rates.

Similar themes appeared in a special presentation by **Prof. Leonard Greenhalgh** of Dartmouth, again tying pre-school (ages 2-4) educational practice to the larger economic and societal outcomes over the next half century. Prof. Greenhalgh warned that it is this crucial lacuna in previous educational efforts, a gap that ripples through the educational system, that is putting the U.S. out of the running for economic success in a global age.

The direction and shape of the internet, and telecommunications generally, was the subject of an opening panel with expert speakers **Brent Olson**, AT&T, **Deven McGraw**, Center for Democracy and Technology, **Jules Polonetsky**, Future of Privacy Forum, and **Jim Harper** of the Cato Institute. With moderator by **David Honig**, of the Minority Media Telecommunications Council, the panel discussed the much bruited concept of “net neutrality”, the privacy problem in the widely promoted adoption of sophisticated information technology for medical use, internet privacy generally, and the knotty problem of achieving broad interoperability in public service and general uses.

Dialogue on Diversity, as in past Public Policy Forums, zeroed in on its signature issue, the integration of immigrants into the Nation of Immigrants. **Tamar Jacoby**, who has generated much of the intellectual force behind the present immigration reform movement, reviewed such prospects as there may be for early action by the Congress on any species of comprehensive immigration reform legislation. **William Ramos** of NALEO offered commentary on the sharply limited political viability of anti-immigrant ideologies in recent electoral experience.

In a panel on the economic slowdown speakers **Tim Sandos**, President of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, and **Andrew Jakobovics** of the Center for American Progress analyzed the troubled housing industry, and the related plague of foreclosures and difficulties of the larger financial system, reviewing the multi-pronged attack on the slackening of business activity that has been mounted by the federal government.

Forum attendance this year outstripped that of previous programs, with a notable contingent from IT firms and think tanks, Congressional staff, women entrepreneurs and organization leaders, and public officials, among them a mayor and municipal council members. Lunch Sponsorship was by AT&T. Travel sponsor was Southwest Airlines.