

*The More Things Change,  
The More They Stay the Same:*  
**Latino Underrepresentation  
in New York State Government  
1983-2009**



**September 2009**

## Introduction to “Simple Justice: Puerto Rican and Latino Government Employment in New York and the Failure of Affirmative Action” (1983)

**W**hen the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy (currently known as the National Institute for Latino Policy) was established in 1982, one of the first reports we issued focused on the extreme underrepresentation of Latinos in the New York State government work force. It found that, although then 10 percent of the state’s population, Latinos were less than 3 percent of state government workers, making Latinos the most underrepresented group in the state. In 1983, the Institute followed up with a second report, “Simple Justice: Puerto Rican and Latino Government Employment in New York and the Failure of Affirmative Action,” which [can be downloaded here](#).

Fast forward 27 years and the NYS Department of Civil Service issues a new report, “[Diversity in the New York State Government Workforce: A Look at the Last Decade, and the Next](#)” (March 2009). It reported that Latinos in 2008 made up less than 4 percent of the state government workforce, while representing 13 percent of the state labor force, showing a widening gap in this community’s underrepresentation in New York State government employment since 1983. This was a rate of growth in Latino representation that was accurately projected by the 1983 Institute report if nothing was done to address the problem.

Latinos are one of the largest and fastest-growing segments of the New York State population. In recognition of this, the persistent problem of extreme underrepresentation should be a matter of serious concern to the Governor and the State Legislature. Indicative of the gravity of the problem is that the agency in charge of the state’s equal employment opportunity program, the Department of Civil Service, which issued the 2009 report, reported in it that it only had 13 Latino employees out of 934, representing only 1.4 percent of its staff! This is the agency that is charged with coming up with solutions to the problem of Latino underrepresentation in state government. This is not, to say the least, very reassuring.

On September 1, 2009, then Governor David Paterson convened a meeting in Albany to discuss issues of concern to the Latino community. Among the issues discussed were this problem of extreme underrepresentation and the proposal that the Governor reestablish the Governor’s Advisory Committee for Hispanic Affairs first established in 1983 by then Governor Mario Cuomo, which was dismantled by Republican Governor George Pataki. Will anything concrete come this meeting or will Governor Paterson, the State Legislature and the state’s major political parties continue to marginalize the Latino community?

We hope that by taking this long view that the seriousness of this problem will sink in to our political leaders. A reading of our 1983 report has an eerie resonance with the situation that Latinos find themselves today in terms of their exclusion from New York State government employment and the decision-making process at the state level in general. The challenge now is to develop effective strategies to change the status quo.

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