

## Hispanics Feeling Brunt of U.S. Economic Crisis

By Jacqueline Baylón

The economic crisis in the United States is making life hard on everybody, but Hispanics seem to be struggling the most.

Hispanics make up 15% of the nation's population, and more than three quarters of Hispanics (78%) say it is difficult to find a job where they live, according to a recent Pew Hispanic Center study. Unemployment rates are flying off the charts: 10.9% for Hispanics vs. 8.1% for the whole population.

Half of adult Hispanics are homeowners, and of that group nearly 9% have missed a mortgage payment in the past year and 3% have received a foreclosure notice, the study reveals.

Hispanic Link News Service spoke to several organization leaders and economic experts in key "Latino" states about how Hispanics in their regions are being affected.

There was near-consensus on three points: Hispanics are disproportionately losing their jobs, facing foreclosures and finding educational opportunities shut off.

California and Florida have been particularly hard hit by foreclosures and the lack of

construction jobs.

"The housing market has just disappeared — fallen off the map," says Filiberto González, chief development officer for the Southern California-based Mexican American Opportunity Foundation. "There are no homes being built right now... The workforce of the home builders has been almost exclusively Latino males, so that entire job stream has been wiped out."

Cuban American National Council president Guarioné Díaz says the same thing about the situation in Miami: "We have been severely impacted by the foreclosures and construction, a major industry here that hires lots of Hispanics."

Díaz and González express cautious optimism that the \$787 billion stimulus package approved Feb. 13 by Congress will mean additional dollars to Hispanic communities

throughout the country.

In Chicago, communications consultant and columnist Esther Cepeda, a member of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, notes that for English-as-a-second-  
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## Protest Against Ariz. Sheriff Draws 5,000, More Actions Coming

By Jon Higuera

PHOENIX - Organizers of the Feb. 28 protest march against Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, which drew some 5,000 participants, plan to continue applying pressure on federal authorities to end the controversial sheriff's tactics of raids and searches that are terrorizing segments of Hispanic community here.



GONZÁLEZ



The group's four-mile march, led part of the way by human rights activist Zack de la Rocha, former lead singer of Rage Against the Machine

## Obama Didn't Mention Immigration to Congress

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language classes, "The funding is evaporating because the state is not funding things and the federal government is pulling back, along with private donors."

Many after- and before-school programs that serve the Latino community specifically do not know where their funding is going to be coming from, she says.

Andy Hernández, executive director of Wesley Center for Family and Neighborhood Development in Austin, Texas, observes that young adults, many with college educations, are struggling the most to find jobs.

Eduardo Giraldo, of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Queens, recounts that most businesses in New York City started closing down in the fall, noting that the immigration issue has brought a lot of uncertainty to the community and the marketplace. "If you look at the major metropolitan areas, Hispanic Link Weekly Report

a lot of business is done by immigrants, especially in big cities like New York and Los Angeles."

He adds that Hispanic enterprises are at the bottom of the "green" eco-business ladder and lack essential funding. Immigration reform will be an "intricate" part of recovery from recession, he predicts.

Global reports show that the pain felt by Latino immigrants to the United States is considerably less than is being experienced in their home countries.

Most vulnerable here are the undocumented, who contribute to the U.S. economy but have no safety nets, states Brent Wilkes, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based League of United Latin American Citizens. "They are getting the brunt of this. If we had immigration reform, they could stay in the employment force and support their families, whether here or back home."

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