

MINUTES

GOVERNOR'S ETHNIC AMERICAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

November 18, 2005 – 3:00 P.M.

Jim Thorpe Building – Conference Room G-91
2101 North Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

Advance written notice of regular scheduled meetings was filed with the Secretary of State on October 21, 2004. The agenda for this meeting was posted with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This meeting was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Open Meeting Act, Section 301 through 314 of Title 25.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Sandra Kaye Rana, Chair
Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour, Vice-Chair/Secretary
Dr. Riaz Ahmad
Malaka A. Elyazgi
Mohammad Farzaneh
Dr. Basel S. Hassoun
Dr. Mohammad Karami

MEMBERS ABSENT

Karen E. Bak
Dr. Fayyaz H. Hashmi

OPM STAFF PRESENT

Brenda C. Thornton
Linda Williamson

VISITORS PRESENT

Oscar B. Jackson, Jr. – Administrator of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration
Omar Rana – Special guest
Hamid Farzaneh – Special guest
Judy Gibbs Robinson – Reporter, The Oklahoman

A. CALL TO ORDER.

Dr. Sandra Rana, Chair of the Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council, called the meeting to order at 3:17 p.m.

B. INTRODUCTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS, STAFF AND GUESTS.

Council members, staff and guests introduced themselves. Chair Rana welcomed everyone and thanked each for attending.

C. REVIEW OF MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 19, 2005, MEETING.

Dr. Basel Hassoun's motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2005, meeting as presented was seconded by Mohammad Farzaneh. The motion carried unanimously.

D. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT.

Malaka Elyazgi presented Dr. Van Anderson's letter sent to the council on behalf of State Superintendent Sandy Garrett addressing the concerns that the Education Committee had discussed with Dr. Anderson during a previous meeting with her. In reference to their concern relating to school curriculums, Dr. Anderson informed them that the Governor appoints the committee that reviews all textbooks. Ms. Elyazgi recommended that the council become involved as directly as possible in this process, preferably by identifying a community member who is willing to serve as a committee member. In reference to recognition of their cultural and religious holidays, Dr. Anderson suggested that the community provide information to individual school districts. Following the council's discussion to determine the best way to inform the school districts, Dr. Hassoun made a motion that the council send an official letter to the school districts identifying the two main Eid holidays and ask that these days be recognized as "excused absences." The motion was seconded by Mr. Farzaneh and passed unanimously.

Ms. Elyazgi asked the council members to review Dr. Anderson's letter and forward any additional questions or comments directly to Dr. Anderson. The council agreed with Ms. Elyazgi's recommendation that the council should invite Superintendent Garrett to a future meeting.

E. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The council made the following formal acknowledgments:

- The one-year anniversary of the Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council. Chair Rana commented that it has been a distinct honor to serve the Governor and the State of Oklahoma, and looks forward to many more years filled with great accomplishments for all Oklahomans.
- The loss of Dayna Petete and her contributions to this council by providing information on the legislative process. Ms. Petete was the Assistant Administrator for Communications and Legislative Liaison for the Office of Personnel Management.
- The contributions that Ethnic Americans have made to the hurricane relief efforts through volunteering time and fund raising efforts. It was noted that one local group of Muslim Americans gave a check for over \$30,000 to the Red Cross.
- The contributions that Ethnic Americans have made to the earthquake relief in Pakistan and other areas. It was noted that these efforts, as well as those for the hurricane relief, are still ongoing.
- The generosity of the Broken Arrow Bass Pro Shops and the Hanover Company, located in Broken Arrow, to partner with the Tulsa area Ethnic American community to supply relief items and ship them to the earthquake victims in Pakistan.

[Several members commented that many of their community members gave additionally through their businesses and professional organizations. It was noted that there are many other examples of significant contributions from the Muslim American communities that are not mentioned because, just as it is their cultural and religious belief to be supportive of those who are in need, it also their cultural and religious belief, "as stated by Dr. Hassoun, 'to give without mentioning and not ask for any recognition and be humble about this process' " or as stated in the famous quote, "*blessed are those who can give without remembering and receive without forgetting.*"]

- On Tuesday, November 1, 2005, the Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council hosted the second annual Iftar Dinner at the Governor's Mansion.

F. ESTABLISH DATES FOR 2006 COUNCIL MEETINGS.

The council agreed to set February 17th, May 19th, August 18th, and December 1st as their meeting dates for 2006. The meetings will begin at 3:00 p.m. and be held at the Office of Personnel Management.

G. OLD BUSINESS.

The council agreed to have their February meeting at the new Oklahoma History Center, if available.

H. NEW BUSINESS.

Chair Rana brought to the table for discussion the idea of inviting guest speakers from agencies and organizations to address the council and broaden their awareness of opportunities to partner with them.

Vice-Chair Marjan Seirafi-Pour made the recommendation that the council consider formally recognizing the youth from their community who are graduating from high school and have accomplished high achievements.

Dr. Mohammad Karami asked if members of the Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council, as an individual, could host fund raising activities for candidates who are running for office. Mr. Oscar Jackson commented that as we move into this campaign season, it is important that activities are separate and distinct from the council and that there absolutely be no overlap. Mr. Jackson noted that he would share any further information that he receives with the council.

I. ADJOURNMENT.

Chair Rana adjourned the meeting at 4:37 p.m.