Latino Commission Makes First Stop in Chicago

Political, legal and community leaders have one goal: finding a unified voice for America's Latinos

By Alex Perez

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Chicago on Friday was the first stop in an eight city nationwide tour gathering ideas on how to best address the concerns facing the Latino community.

The American Bar Association's Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities met at the Loyola University Chicago School of Law with one goal: finding a unified voice for America's Latinos.

The conference brought together political, legal and community leaders to discuss issues like access to services and immigration reform.

There are an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States, and the president of the National Council of La Raza said she hopes people don't confused calls for reform with legal leniency.

"When we support immigration reform, we recognize and understand that security and enforcement must be part of the equation," said Janet Murguía.

The commission is the brainchild of Stephen Zach, the first Latino president of the American Bar Association. He pointed out that roughly 30,000 Hispanics will turn 18 years of age every month for the next 20 years.

Getting non-Latinos involved, he said, is an important part of the conversation.

"We're all immigrants here. And how we treat each generation of immigrants is important for the very fabric of our society," said Zach.

Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez agrees.

"It's always better to collaborate and think of new ways we can attack the problems," she said.

The opinions and ideas will all be compiled and presented to policy makers in Washington, D.C. in about a year.