

## **Toledo Hispanics hope Bush, Mexican president will discuss amnesty, trade in meeting**

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### **Body**

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Members of a large and growing Hispanic community in this gritty Lake Erie city say **amnesty** for illegal immigrants and the effects of free **trade** cannot be ignored when President Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox visit Thursday.

While **amnesty** seems to have broad appeal among the city's **Hispanics**, many immigrants are wary of NAFTA: some say it has not created jobs in Latin America, while others say it has taken jobs from the United States.

The White House said **Toledo** was chosen as a stop on the state visit because of its growing Hispanic community. The two presidents are to spend Thursday visiting with children at a community center after speaking at the University of **Toledo**.

The city, a Democratic and union stronghold, suffered heavy job losses at glass and auto plants in the 1980s. The city's voters backed Al Gore in the 2000 election even though Ohio went for Bush.

According to the 2000 census, 17,141 people - or 5.5 percent of **Toledo's** 313,619 residents - were Hispanic. Of those, 13,320 - or 4.2 percent of the city's population - said they were Mexican. More than 4,000 **Hispanics** moved to the city in the past decade.

On Wednesday, Fox opened his state visit by challenging Bush to work out a bilateral migration agreement before year's end. Baldemar Velasquez, director of the **Toledo**-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee, has also pressured the Bush administration to give **amnesty** to new immigrants.

"We are referring to human beings whose sole purpose for crossing deserts and facing enormous dangers is looking for a job," said Velasquez, whose organization represents 7,000 field workers.

The state estimates that there are 13,000 migrant workers in Ohio, but advocates for migrant farm workers estimate there are up to 70,000 - the majority here illegally.

Some say those who have immigrated to the city have fewer jobs because NAFTA has siphoned jobs from **Toledo** to Mexico. Others say immigrants have come to the United States because NAFTA has not created enough good jobs in their countries.

"If NAFTA in concept is so good, why are there so many Mexicans coming here looking for work?" said Louis Escobar, who in 1997 became the first Hispanic elected to the **Toledo** City Council.

Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, a Democrat who represents **Toledo**, estimates Ohio has lost at least 37,000 jobs because of the agreement with Mexico. Most recently, workers at the city's new Jeep plant had **hoped**

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DaimlerChrysler would bring production of the hot-selling PT Cruiser to Toledo, but the jobs went south of the border.

On the Net:

The Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs: <http://www.state.oh.us/spa/>

## Graphic

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AP Photo CO501, 503; AP Graphic TOLEDO HISPANICS

## Classification

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**Person:** GEORGE W BUSH (79%); AL GORE (57%); VICENTE FOX QUESADA (57%); MARCY KAPTUR (57%)

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