

Utah's GOP Reaches Out to Latinos; Republicans initiate 'most aggressive' recruitment campaign in state party's history

Salt Lake Tribune (Utah)

January 15, 2002, Tuesday

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Section: Final; Pg. D4

Length: 489 words

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Body

Looking to expand their political capital beyond the stereotypical white, male establishment, Republican leaders in Utah said Monday they have embraced the "revitalization" of a state chapter of the National Republican Hispanic Assembly.

The caucus, essentially dormant for the past few years, is generating renewed interest in Utah because of the Republican Party's stand on family values, gun rights and patriotism, said Utah Republican Party Chairman Joe Cannon. "These people have a natural inclination to the Republican Party."

During a news conference Monday inside the state Capitol, the **GOP's** top brass also unveiled a Spanish-language version of the state party Web site, www.utgop.org, and a recruitment campaign, coordinated by the assembly, that they described as "the most aggressive campaign in the history of Utah to recruit Hispanics into the Republican Party."

"It's important for us to be more active in our Hispanic communities," said Senate President Al Mansell, R-Sandy. "We need to **reach out** to others and bring them in" to the Republican fold.

The **GOP's** Hispanic Assembly has established new headquarters at 117 E. South Temple in Salt Lake City, and appointed a chairman, Marco Diaz, a 31-year-old American Express executive who moved from Peru to Utah at age 17 to study at Brigham Young University.

Diaz outlined three goals for the assembly:

Recruit grass-roots activists from the state's 201,559 **Latinos**.

Involve viable Latino candidates in the political process, especially through appointments and elections.

Advise **GOP** leaders as the "eyes and ears" of the Latino community.

"We can have a huge impact on the Republican Party," Diaz said.

Latinos are a natural fit for the **GOP** because of a shared pro-life, pro-family agenda, he said.

But, Diaz said, it will be a challenge to recruit **Latinos** committed to bedrock Democratic causes such as affirmative action and civil rights, issues that have helped make Utah's Hispanic Caucus an influential faction within the state's Democratic Party.

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Diaz, a lifelong Republican, praised the education initiatives of U.S. Rep. Chris Cannon and U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch and exhibited no fear of challenging the sacred cows of some Utah conservatives.

Even though Utah's House **GOP** caucus crushed all attempts to rewrite Utah's hate crimes law during the 2001 Legislature, Diaz said he "supports the principle" of perfecting the law.

While noting the need to secure the state's airports, he said a recent roundup of workers at Salt Lake City International Airport, mostly **Latinos** who had used forged documents for job applications, "could have been done a little differently."

And, Diaz he said he disagrees with Utah's English Only law, an initiative supported by many conservative Republicans.

Praising the Hispanic Assembly's reformation, Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff, in Spanish, said, "Your vote is your voice."

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: US REPUBLICAN PARTY (92%); POLITICAL PARTIES (91%); POLITICS (90%); CONSERVATISM (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); CAUCUSES (89%); US CONGRESS (89%); ELECTIONS (78%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (78%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (78%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (77%); APPOINTMENTS (77%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (77%); CIVIL RIGHTS (76%); HUMAN RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES LAW (76%); FAMILY (76%); AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN EMPLOYMENT (74%); RECRUITMENT & HIRING (74%); GUN CONTROL (71%); LANGUAGE & LANGUAGES (70%); EMPLOYMENT SEARCH (69%); PRESS CONFERENCES (55%); AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (50%); COUNTERFEITING & FORGERY (50%)

Company: AMERICAN EXPRESS CO (55%); BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (54%); AMERICAN EXPRESS CO (55%); BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (54%); BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (54%); BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (54%); 54%);

Organization: BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (54%); BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (54%); 54%);

Ticker: AXP (NYSE) (55%); 55%);

Industry: AIRPORTS (60%)

Person: CHRIS CANNON (58%); ORRIN HATCH (58%)

Geographic: SALT LAKE CITY, UT, USA (92%); UTAH, USA (99%); UNITED STATES (93%)

Load-Date: January 15, 2002

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