



Immigration views are topic of forum

By the Lincoln Journal Star

Monday, Mar 05, 2007 - 11:54:20 pm CST

Attitudes of rural Nebraskans toward Latin American immigration to the state will be among the topics addressed at a public forum Wednesday from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Great Plains Art Museum, 1155 Q St.

The forum will discuss results of the 2006 Nebraska Rural Poll conducted by the Center for Applied Rural Innovation and University of Nebraska researchers.

Among the poll's findings, released in November, were that more than half of rural Nebraskans do not believe Latin American immigration benefits the state. The poll, released Nov. 13, also found that many rural Nebraskans have mixed feelings on policies that would grant citizenship or other benefits to undocumented immigrants. Opinions were mixed about the creation of a guest-worker program for immigrant workers.

The 2006 Nebraska Rural Poll was the first in the poll's 11-year history to research perceptions of immigration from Latin America. Responding to the poll were 2,482 residents of rural Nebraska, with polling conducted in both English and Spanish. The questionnaire also was sent to a sample of rural households with Latino/Spanish surnames; 126 respondents identified themselves as Spanish, Hispanic or Latino.

Randy Cantrell, community development specialist with the Nebraska Rural Initiative, and Miguel A. Carranza, professor of sociology and ethnic studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, will provide an overview of the poll's findings and discuss their implications. Other panelists will include: Lourdes Gouveia, director, Office of Latino/Latin American Studies and professor of sociology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; state Sens. Ray Aguilar of Grand Island and DiAnna Schimek of Lincoln; Jose J. Soto, vice president for affirmative action/equity/diversity at Southeast Community College; Darcy Tromanhauser, immigrant integration participation program director, Nebraska Appleseed; and Todd Wiltgen, state director, office of U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel.

Questions from the audience will follow the conclusion of the panel. A reception will be held after the question-and-answer session.

The event is free and open to the public. It is co-sponsored by the UNL College of Arts and Sciences, Nebraska Rural Initiative, and the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.