

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS
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For Information Contact:

William J. Stephney, Chairman, 202-376-7533

E-mail: stepsunmusic@msn.com

**New Jersey State Advisory Committee Report Spotlights Barriers
Faced by Immigrants**

Committee Issues Findings and Recommendations to Identify Problems and to Foster Dialogue

WASHINGTON, DC - The New Jersey State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released its report, "Overcoming the Barriers Faced by Immigrants." The report, based on presentations by a diverse group of government officials, scholars, advocates, immigrants, and members of the public, explores the role of state and local governments in enforcing immigration laws, the critical employment, housing, and educational barriers facing immigrants in New Jersey, and the particular challenges faced by asylum seekers and other immigrants subject to detention.

In its report, the Committee notes that whether or not the federal government enacts comprehensive immigration reform, all immigrants are protected by existing laws, and the report focuses on those governing fair labor standards, workplace safety, and access to fair housing free of discriminatory treatment. The report concludes with eight specific findings and recommendations, including strengthening enforcement of existing laws, educating immigrants as to their rights, and encouraging formation of a state task force to examine and improve conditions in detention centers.

The report also recommends improving relationships between the immigrant community and the police, leaving the enforcement of federal immigration laws to the national government. To benefit fully from the talents of immigrants, the Committee urges all public institutions of higher learning to provide in-state tuition to the children of immigrants.

William J. Stephney, chair of the New Jersey state advisory committee, observes, "Improving conditions and opportunities for immigrants in the employment and housing context -- and beyond -- are essential steps in assuring respect for the basic civil rights of immigrants." Leanna Brown, former chair of the state advisory committee notes, "The report includes a solid framework on

which to debate the many immigration issues facing New Jersey and the United States today.

Congress has directed the Commission to establish state advisory committees (SACs) in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to study issues and forward advisory reports to the Commission on matters within the agency's jurisdiction that reflect the views of the majority of SAC members producing the report.

The SACs' reports to the Commission are wholly independent, and reviewed by Commission staff only for legal and procedural compliance with Commission policies and procedures. SAC reports are not subject to Commission approval, fact-checking or policy changes.