

Immigrant action day held at Chemeketa

By Justin Much

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Equipped with numbers and a quest, Causa held its annual Immigrant Action Day at Chemeketa Community College on Saturday.

About 300 turned out by midday at the Oregon Latino immigrant rights organization's event. The event featured speakers and panels on topics affecting immigrants.

"We are talking about our issues and our agenda for the year of 2012," said Causa executive director Francisco Lopez. "This is our 14th year (for the event), and we have leaders here from across the state."

Lopez said the event normally draws between 150 and 200, but expanding its geographical reach to include Portland and Central Oregon brought a larger turnout. Other event sponsors included Chemeketa's Multicultural Center and the group Juntos along with Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality, Voz Hispana and Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas.

Another factor in sizeable turnout is the year's agenda is a weighty one.

Focal topics included helping immigrants to become citizens, securing and restoring driver's licenses and assuring education.

"One of our highlights for this year is increasing voter registration, especially since it's a (national) election year," Lopez added.

A panel of four — Cornelius Police Chief Paul Rubenstein, former Hillsboro Police Chief Ron Louie, Oregon Association of Nurseries executive director Jeff Stone, and Lopez — fielded immigration reform and driver's license questions.

Other speakers included Barbara Byrd of Oregon AFL-CIO, Salem attorneys Barbara Ghio and Kurt Muntz, and Causa representative Christian Baeff.

Several Causa officials cited pivotal alliances with the faith community, business, labor and

Causa issues for 2012

1. Driver's licenses for all Oregon residents
2. Tuition equity for all Oregon residents
3. Prenatal care services for all women regardless of immigration status
4. Implementing prosecutorial discretion to stop the deportation and the separation of Latino families
5. Halt collaboration between U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and local law enforcement
6. Paid sick days, workers rights and tenants rights
7. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality education and integration
8. Set the ground for legalization strategy for 2013-14

SOURCE: Causa

education sectors.

The overriding aim was action.

"We all get our marching orders for 2012 today," Lopez said. "We want to lay the groundwork for 2013."

The political element is of paramount importance.

"Oregon will never become like Arizona or Alabama," Lopez said. "We are about inclusion … We will defeat any anti-immigration bills in the legislature.

Twelve anti-immigration bills were introduced in the Oregon legislature in 2011. "We defeated all 12, and we will defeat any this year and next year," he added.

Saturday also marked the first day of the group's new website, causaoregon.org, Causa media spokesman Erik Sorenson said. He said the new site will help facilitate the agenda and provide an easier navigating experience for users.

"Our old website was so hard to manage. The new one has multimedia and will be better for folks to upload stuff and get in and get out faster," Sorenson said.

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