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Hispanics' immigration, access to justice are topics of ABA hearing

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An American Bar Association panel is set to explore the challenges facing Hispanics in the United States during a hearing Friday in Chicago.

Civic leaders and members of the bench and bar are to testify before the Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities about topics that include Latinos' access to the justice system.

Other topics to be discussed are the "criminalization" of immigrants and how the housing crisis and homelessness have affected Hispanics.

Cook County State's Attorney [Anita M. Alvarez](#) and Circuit Judge [Jesse G. Reyes](#) are among the witnesses scheduled to testify before the commission.

The hearing will be from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, 111 E. Pearson St.

There is no charge for attending the hearing.

The commission was established by ABA President Stephen N. Zack, a Miami attorney who is the first Hispanic to lead the bar group. Zack will make opening remarks at the hearing.

Also slated to greet those attending the hearing are law school Dean [David N. Yellen](#) and commission chairman Cesar L. Alvarez, executive director of Greenberg, Traurig in Miami.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, an honorary co-chairman of the commission, will make comments at the close of the hearing.

Reyes, who will speak about foreclosures and homelessness within the Hispanic community, said the overall program will draw attention to the issues that exist within the Hispanic community and how different areas of the country handle those issues. At the same time, problems in a particular community can be issues that affect many different groups of people, Reyes said.

Those who listen to the speakers, he said, "will become aware of some of the issues that people from around the country are seeing that affect the Hispanic community. ... My remarks will focus in on the Latino community, and also on how it's impacting everyone generally.

"When you have a number of homes foreclosed in the community they are also impacting the residents of that community because now those homes are vacant," he said. "It's affecting the municipalities that are now losing tax revenue fees to these townships. When you address an issue it's not only isolated to that community. It's about what the effect is to all of us."

