

## **LATINO JOURNAL INTERVIEW WITH JAMES E. CAMPOS, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ECONOMIC IMPACT AND DIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

**José:** This is an interview with **James E. Campos**, Director of the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity at the Department of Energy. Good afternoon, Mr. Campos.

**James:** Hello, good afternoon.

**José:** Please share with us a bit about your background and what got you into this position?

**James:** Well, energy has always been an area that I have had a great interest in. I served in 2010 through 2013 as the Director of Renewable Energy Initiatives for the second-largest community college in the United States, College of Southern Nevada (CSN). I served as the Director for all four campuses and then I went on to do different work relating to energy such as consulting on a new technology called cold cracking, different than vertical fracking but similar outcomes with less pollution. So, with that background, I sought an opportunity at the Department of Energy with the Trump Administration.

**José:** Excellent, can you tell us about the program you launched called Equity in Energy and what you hope to accomplish with that?

**James:** Certainly, Equity in Energy is an initiative that helps my office fulfil a congressional mandate. We have a very specific congressional mandate that was written in 1979 after the oil embargo by two individuals. One was the former and late Congressman Mickey Leland and the second was his chief of staff, Rodney Ellis. Ellis is now a County Commissioner in Harris County (Houston) Texas. They created this office which I now have the honor to serve in. I was confirmed by the United States Senate in April of 2018 and it didn't take long before I quickly learned that we needed to do more to create greater awareness and interest in Energy.

I sat down with a few of my colleagues and other stakeholders to develop this initiative called Equity in Energy. It consists of five pillars. The five pillars are fundamental to what our minority workforce economy is currently facing and what our overall energy economy will face in the future as it concerns minority participation. Both through the energy workforce and procurement opportunities such as supplier diversity. With the character of our country changing, which can be seen by the student profile of K through 12, which shows a minority-majority by 2021 or 2022 and with a minority-majority country by the year 2040 or 2045, depending on which statistical publication you reference. The need for minorities to enter the energy work field in all the different energy sectors is ever increasing.

Today, we are not getting enough minority participation within the different energy sectors to fulfil the anticipated labor need that is just around the corner. And, quite frankly, right now. It's not just a couple of years from now, the demand is here now. In less than a decade, experts are talking about 2 or perhaps 3 million additional STEM jobs needed to fulfil the need of the country and that's with the current matriculation of minorities within STEM fields. And that's not referring to the actual graduation rates but just the matriculation rate. With the current STEM population of 5% Hispanic, 6% African American and Asians that are a little higher, you add that to the number of STEM jobs that are needed to be filled and the numbers don't add up. The STEM minority profile by ethnicity, race and gender lags

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behind their population growth. We are going to fall short of individuals within STEM-related jobs, but specifically, also within energy STEM-related jobs unless we make sure every community has access to STEM education and training.

Energy is a great opportunity for jobs and it is also an area that many of us are concerned about. Given this information, understanding what's before us, but also understanding the great opportunities that we have for the minority communities within the Energy sector, which traditionally haven't participated at proportionate levels as a minority group, Equity in Energy is a tool, to effectuate change and integrate the thought process of why and how Energy is so important to minority communities and how we need minority communities to play a bigger part, not just for their well-being, but also for the national security of our country moving forward. It is a national security issue that we don't have enough diverse individuals entering STEM within the Energy workforce and that is an issue for all Americans. But for minorities, it is an issue that they are not participating enough in a phenomenal economy. And it's something that was a desire of mine to create an initiative that had pillars that holistically addressed these different areas. So, we're able to better penetrate those communities with information, with access, with awareness in all the areas as it concerns the lack of participation with minorities, within the Energy sectors.

**José:** Okay, and so STEM is one of the things that you're focused on. Can you talk about one of the ways it could be used to address such objectives and noble ambition?

**James:** Well, one of the pillars, for example, is STEM enhancement within Equity and Energy. The core of Equity in Energy, that's the central theme, are access and awareness. The strategy is to create awareness of what's out there, and then create the mechanisms for access. That's essential. Now, as we refer to STEM enhancement or STEM, in particular, there is a great void within minority communities on what Energy jobs are. And there's a great misunderstanding of the number of opportunities that are in the Energy sector. Many people think when we mentioned Energy, especially if it's in the area of oil and gas, you're only talking about STEM-related professions, they are only thinking of individuals that are perhaps roughnecks or surveyors of some sort, or even owners/employees of gas stations. Although those are all admirable professions, there is so much more job diversity.

There is a lack of understanding and knowledge of what individuals can do with a STEM degree within the Energy sectors, within oil and gas, the electric generation side, renewable energy and of course alternative energy sources. It's the whole gamut of energy. We have to make those students that are matriculating into the STEM fields knowledgeable on what sort of jobs are being offered in the Energy economy. One of the many examples I provide that is very popular within our society in general, is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Too many people do not realize the main component of artificial intelligence is Energy. And a lot of AI research and technology is being constructed, innovated, and facilitated at our national labs. And that is something that we, as minority communities, don't have a full appreciation of. And those are the individuals that I'm referring to right now that are matriculating into STEM programs that we need to reach.

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For example, jobs can be in the areas of Information Technology (IT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Telecommunications. Quite frankly, the jobs span many sectors. STEM training permeates throughout the entire Energy economy and it starts with creating a greater interest in engaging within STEM fields. So, it is imperative that create greater awareness and interest to recruit minority students that are entering high school/College into STEM-related fields.

**José:** Can you tell us about the national laboratories?

**James:** We have 17 national laboratories located across the United States. As you well know, we have four in California, two in New Mexico, two in Illinois, one in Idaho, one in Tennessee, one in New York and others scattered throughout the United States.

These national laboratories are truly national treasures. I had the privilege to visit approximately nine of the labs. Once you visit any one of these labs you quickly realize the breadth of innovation and research taking place. As the previous Secretary often said, the DOE stands for the Department of Energy but it honestly should stand for the Department of Everything because these national labs do everything.

If you put on television channels such as A&E or Discovery, you come across subjects such as space exploration, biology, cancer research, prosthetics, artificial intelligence and supercomputing. What people don't know is that much of the research in these vast areas are done at our national labs. For example, the three fastest computers are housed in our national labs. When I say a lab, it is not to say these are a singular lab somewhere within an office building and it's not necessarily an office building either. These labs are more like campuses. They are very large campuses made up of many large buildings and facilities and research laboratories that house the best scientists and engineers in the world and are doing the most fascinating work you can imagine. I can go on and on about each of these labs and how they specialize in different areas and what they do.

Because there is such little knowledge of our labs, Equity in Energy is creating the nexus that provides awareness. This country will never meet its highest potential if we do not include as many Americans as possible. Our country needs a deeper, more enriched and full integration of all our population. What makes our country so rich is our diversity. Our national labs serve as beacons of technology and innovation for our country but they can also serve a means to help promote the diversity and inclusion that we need as a country. I can't say enough good things about our national labs and the great men and women that work in them.

**José:** Excellent. What message would you give to the Latino leaders across the country? Those that are elected, appointed, the business community and labor groups. What message would you like to leave them with about Equity in Energy?

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**James:** I would tell them that we need all hands on deck and I welcome the opportunity to work with all leaders at every level of government as well as the community. Equity in Energy is an initiative I felt that needed to be created by the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity. It's a DOE-complex wide initiative that has five main pillars which are STEM Enhancement, as we talked about, second technical assistance, third supplier diversity, fourth energy affordability, and fifth workforce development with the core overlaying central theme being Awareness and Access.

Equity and Energy also have important sub-pillars such as prison re-entry, AI, and a few others that help round-out the present interest and needs in our energy economy. Again, the central theme is "Interest and Access" which is an absolute necessity to achieve true success with the five pillars that we have identified that are needed in our energy economy. I encourage all individuals out there to learn more about the Equity in Energy initiative and what we are doing at the Department of Energy to achieve the goals of energy needs. Equity in Energy is not just an issue of the right thing to do, but it is also an important national security issue. It's an absolute necessity to provide equity in energy if we are to sustain energy independence and continued dominance. Equity in energy creates more opportunities for all.

I firmly want our country to always be in a dominant and independent energy position in the world. It is the catalyst that will drive us to many more economic heights and help sustain a climate of increased innovation for the betterment of the entire world. As Hispanics, we need to take this growing opportunity seriously and understand the breadth of possibilities that all the energy sectors offer. Within all of the energy sectors, Hispanics are not participating anywhere near the level that we should and need to be for a thriving growing community and must do everything within our power to create better awareness and access to fully participate in the American dream.

**Jose:** Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Campos, for taking the time to speak with Latino Journal Digital.