

## IT MAKES SENSE FOR AMERICA'S LATINO LEADERS TO PAY ATTENTION TO ENERGY JOBS

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Recent reports show America's oil and gas industry supports [roughly 10.3 million people](#) in great-paying jobs across the country.

Hispanics, America's largest minority group with 60 million people, are already 25 percent of K-12 students. Those young people will soon become of working age, whereby the energy sector could be a very attractive opportunity.

Hispanics have the highest labor force participation rate in America, according to [the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). Hispanics will work in vocational-technical occupations such as welders, pipefitters, truckers, and laborers. They will also go on to college to get a degree. They will move to new locations for a good-paying job. They will get up in cold chilly weather early in the morning to go to work. They are an industrious, dynamic, and proud, hard-working bunch of people.

Out of California's 518,000 jobs in the direct and indirect oil and gas sector, Hispanics hold 30%. That's right, over 155,400 excellent-paying mostly union jobs, just in one state, according to the ["2019 Report Oil and Gas in California" by the Institute for Applied Economics of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation \(LAEDC\)](#).

At the current trajectory, not many Hispanic workers will go into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education, and there are fewer PhDs in energy-related STEM fields. However, there is no reason why that trend shouldn't change.

America's greatest need for Hispanic development and placement is with the energy-focused STEM occupations. The energy industry has an excellent opportunity to recognize this dramatic American workforce dynamic. There is certainly room to grow to develop energy-focused STEM pathways for educated Hispanic workers.

So, Hispanics In Energy has teamed up with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and its 530 plus Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) across the country to create the Hispanic American Energy STEM Institute (HAESI). The Institute was launched in November 2019 in San Antonio, Texas, as a collaborative with 20 national Hispanic organizations that include the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). Our goal is to graduate 25,000 Hispanic youth with energy STEM degrees beginning in 2025.

Arizona was the first state to enlist in embarking on HAESI and has already laid the groundwork to make this happen with Chair Lea Márquez Peterson, Arizona Corporation Commission, and the formidable David Ademe of Chicanos Por La Causa. California, with its 15 million Hispanics and 176 Hispanic Serving Institutions, should be next.

Of all the oil and gas jobs available to Hispanics, none beats the job opportunities as in the 86,000 square mile Permian Basin, a land many times bigger than Delaware (2,491 square miles), where the locals are 65% Hispanic. The Permian Basin is gigantic and sits between the southeastern part of New Mexico and the western/El Paso part of Texas. However, Midland and Odessa, Texas, claim to be the gateway into the Permian Basin.

The three trillion dollar oil deposit that is in the Permian Basin is critical to help achieve America's two essential desires: 1) ensure long-term energy security and 2) sustain the country's wealth creation.

According to the [2015-2020 Permian Basin Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) (CEDS), the Permian Basin would create and sustain 444,000 good-paying jobs just on the Texas side.

Hispanics are already a large part of the workforce in the shale plays of Texas, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota, and Oklahoma. And, much can be said about oil exploration and leasing along the Gulf of Mexico.

Given the potential changes in energy policy by Congress and a new administration, it is essential to carefully and closely examine the impact these changes will have on Hispanic energy workers. For example, we know in California, a typical solar rooftop installer makes \$13 per hour, usually with no benefits and no long-term employment opportunities that include a career ladder and other career-sustaining features. Is that better than other energy sectors? The answer is a quick no. In fact, a survey last year conducted by the North American Building Trades Union found that natural gas jobs are more reliable and provide higher wages and salaries than alternative renewable jobs.

Should Hispanic elected officials, business, community, and labor leaders miss out on these potential opportunities? You got it, no.

Our elected leaders at the federal, state and local levels need to pay attention to Washington's energy policy challenges, affecting thousands of Hispanic households. If they don't act on this significant economic opportunity on our behalf, who will?