

Chamber taps new president

U.S. Hispanic Chamber hires new leader from Michigan group

BY GISELLE GREENWOOD
AUSTIN BUSINESS JOURNAL STAFF

After a nine-month tenure as interim president and CEO of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, J.R. Gonzales of Austin finally will have some time to rest.

During its annual meeting in Austin, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce was expected Sept. 18 to announce the hiring of Armando Ojeda as president and CEO.

Ojeda is executive director of the Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which was founded in 1989 and is based in suburban Detroit. Michigan is home to more than 10,000 Hispanic-owned businesses that generate annual receipts exceeding \$2 billion and employ nearly 14,000 workers.

Ojeda couldn't be reached for comment.

At the Austin convention, the Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce was being honored by

See HISPANIC, page 57



Gonzales

HISPANIC:

Gonzales staying to aid transition

From page 3

the U.S. Hispanic Chamber as one of two winners of the award for midsize chamber of the year.

Gonzales is founder and president of Austin-based JRG Communications Inc., a public relations and marketing firm.

Gonzales says he will stay in Washington, D.C., through the year to aid the transition. Going forward, his full-time involvement with the Hispanic Chamber hasn't been determined.

When President and CEO George Herrera resigned in January, Gonzales was asked to assume the job. Gonzales, who then was the chamber's elected chairman, declined to accept the chamber's top paid position but offered to fill in temporarily.

"I had no interest in the job full time, but I wanted to do everything necessary for the organization to ensure that it survived," Gonzales says. "I put the organization first and set my personal and professional career aside."

Two weeks into the job, Gonzales underwent major emergency surgery. Nonetheless, Gonzales pressed on, dividing his time between Austin and Washington, D.C., where the chamber is based.

"It's been long hours, but I'm very proud of what's been accomplished," Gonzales says.

If the chamber decides not to give Gonzales a new title or if Gonzales decides not to accept it, he says he'll most likely return to Austin after the transition.

"I feel I could be more helpful to the local chamber here," Gonzales says.

Eliza May, president of the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, says Gonzales has done "an excellent job" at the helm of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber.

"I think what's important is that the new leadership will stabilize a transitional period for the organization," May says. "Transitions can be challenging, but this new, permanent leadership will certainly stabilize the organization."

Gonzales joined the U.S. Hispanic Chamber's board in 1999. He is the chief architect of the chamber's organizational leadership training program for member organizations across the country.

The U.S. Hispanic Chamber represents more than 1.2 million Hispanic-owned businesses in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

Email GISELLE GREENWOOD at
(ggreenwood@bizjournals.com).