

MICKEY IBARRA: MY PLANNED GIFT IS SUPPORTING SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER THAN ME



President Clinton speaks with Mickey Ibarra, then Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, in the Oval Office. Photo credit: William J. Clinton Presidential Library.

“Whoever would have believed a little Mexican kid from Salt Lake City, Utah, raised in foster care for most of the first 15 years of my life, would ever have the opportunity to serve a President of the United States?”

To hear Mickey Ibarra tell the story—that is precisely what happened. In 1997, Mickey was named Director of The White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in the Clinton administration—a post he held “until the final hour on the final day” of 2001.

An educator to his core, Ibarra started his professional career as a high school teacher and then moved to the National Education Association (NEA), one of the nation’s most preeminent teachers’ unions.

“In assisting the NEA with its presidential endorsement in 1992, I met Governor Bill Clinton and his campaign team.” Ibarra stayed with NEA after President Clinton won but then took a leave of absence to join the Clinton-Gore reelection campaign in 1996.

Ibarra was the highest-ranking Latino on the reelection campaign—and he made quite an impression. After the reelection, he received a surprise call from Erskine Bowles, who was soon to become President Clinton's Chief of Staff.



President Clinton meets with Mickey and Maria Echaveste, then Director of the Office of Public Liaison, in the Oval Office. Photo credit: William J. Clinton Presidential Library.

“I think I ran the four blocks from the NEA to Erskine's office before he changed his mind.” In June 1997, Mickey began his tenure as assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

As Ibarra reflects on his time in the White House and his decision to make a planned gift for the benefit of the Clinton Foundation, he recalls two moments that he cherishes and continue to inspire him today.

The first was President Clinton's final speech to the delegates attending the 2000 Democratic National Convention. Ibarra quotes the speech's last paragraph and reflects, “I think it was such a beautiful way to wrap up our eight years; putting people first, building those bridges of cooperation, and never stop thinking about tomorrow.”

The second is a photo. It's the official photograph of Ibarra's first meeting in the Oval Office of the White House with his new boss.

In it, Maria Echaveste, then Director of the Office of Public Liaison, is standing next to him. He notes, “Never in the history of the presidency of the United States nor since has a President appointed two assistants to the President, the highest rank, from the Latino community, that served simultaneously ... that's something that I'll always cherish.”

Ibarra now leads the Ibarra Strategy Group, a government relations and public affairs firm based in Washington, D.C. he founded. He also runs the Latino Leaders Network, a philanthropy that honors individuals who are making a positive impact on Latinos in the United States.

“I wanted to find a way that I could continue to engage with our Latino leaders after my time at the White House.”

On continuing to give back to the Clinton Foundation through planned giving, he notes: “I'll never live long enough to fully thank and express my gratitude to President Clinton for all that he's done for the country and providing me the opportunity to assist him at the White House. To be there, at his side he continues, “I am so grateful to be in a position to be able to offer my support to the Clinton Foundation long after I'm gone.”