

DNC chairman urges Hispanics to vote

Terry McAuliffe helps launch the Hispanic Outreach Program in Oregon.

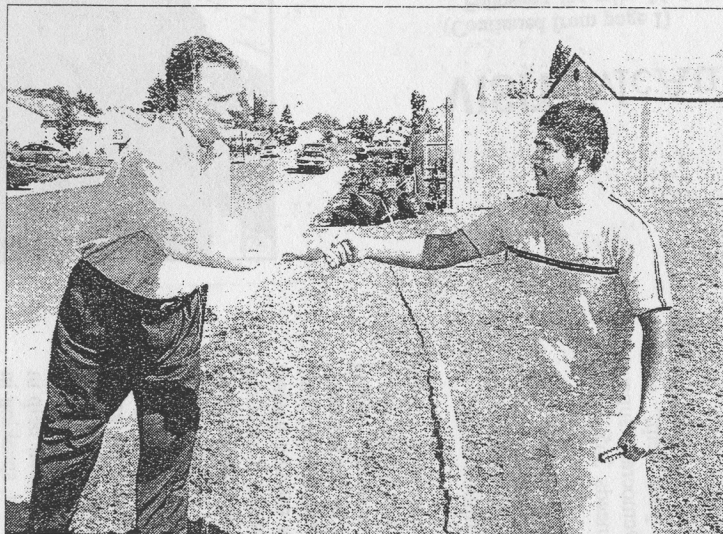
BY JOSEPH B. FRAZIER
The Associated Press

WOODBURN — Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe made a whirlwind visit to this heavily Hispanic town Saturday, saying the Democratic Latino vote can make the difference in Oregon, seen as a crucial state for control of the U.S. Senate.

He was in Woodburn to help launch the party's Hispanic Outreach Program in Oregon, which the party describes as the largest Latino canvass in the state's history.

The goal, he said, is to mobilize a Hispanic community, which in Oregon, at least, turns out in low numbers.

"Let me be crystal clear," he told an audience of 120 or so at the farmworkers' union hall here. "The Democratic Party cannot win elections across this country unless we have strong support from the Latino commu-



BASIL CHILDERS / The Associated Press

OREGON APPEARANCE: Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe (left) stops to shake hands Saturday with resident Florencio Morales in Woodburn.

nity."

"And I want you to know that if you elect good Democrats to office we will not forget our commitment to job creation, Social Security, prescription drug benefits and immigration reform in this country," he said.

"George Bush believes that a

good Latino outreach is bringing a mariachi band to the White House," McAuliffe said. "Democrats believe in working for you every single day to better your lives."

He said 92 percent of the 5,000 Hispanic officeholders in the United States today are Demo-

crats and that Democrats get 66 percent of the Hispanic vote.

"I need your help, the Democratic Party needs your help, our country needs your help," he told the audience.

"One vote keeps us in control of the United States Senate and it is at risk right now, that is why it is key that Bill Bradbury win this United States Senate and you folks are the ones that can make the difference," he said.

Oregon Secretary of State Bradbury is in an uphill race against Republican incumbent Sen. Gordon Smith.

Hispanics number about 250,000 in the state now and are expected to reach 500,000 by 2025.

Woodburn is roughly half Hispanic, and those numbers will grow. Nationally, McAuliffe said, 750,000 new Hispanics will come of voting age in the country per year for the next 20 years.

Yet Hispanic turnout in recent elections in the Willamette Valley, which has large concentrations of Hispanics, has been estimated at around 11 percent.

In the May primary, Democra-

tic legislative candidate Anthony Veliz, running in heavily Hispanic House District 22, was soundly defeated because of the low turnout.

"The Veliz vote took us all by surprise a little bit," said Jason Leon, the Oregon director of the party's Hispanic project.

He said Woodburn is a newly arriving community with changing demographics and that the party is especially targeting the emerging younger generation.

Local Hispanic leaders blame language problems reflected in an inability to fill out forms and a lack of Spanish language ballots and voting materials such as the Voters Pamphlet for part of the problem.

A Woodburn-based voter education project, Voz Hispana, or Hispanic Voice, gradually is registering more Hispanics but not in statistically significant numbers so far.

"This is the beginning of an effort we are doing, to make sure ... the Hispanic community is registered to vote," and to be sure that they actually turn out, McAuliffe said.