

Northern Arizona University, Economic Policy Institute
45th Economic Outlook Conference, November 12th 2020

United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement Panel Biographies



Charles Cervantes

Charles is currently a member of the District of Columbia Bar, several US District Courts and US Circuit Courts of Appeal. He is a Member of the United States Supreme Court Bar. Charles is also the Managing Member of Business & Procurement Partners, LLC, which consults and advises on business, federal contract and grant administration, and on all aspects of international business transactions. He continues to practice law on a select client or subject matter basis, with an emphasis on federal contract and grant administration. Charles has a Top-Secret security clearance. He has held several top-level security clearances while serving at the US Department of State and the US Department of Defense in policy positions.

Charles' four tours of duty with the federal government bring a comprehensive knowledge of the federal system. At the US Department of Energy Headquarters, Charles engaged as a Consultant in research and analysis of energy industries - oil, gas, LNG, solar, wind, and energy efficiency. At the US Department of Defense at the Pentagon, he served the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations & Environment, by assisting with congressional affairs and BRAC. He assisted the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics (AT&L) as Special Assistant to the Director of the Office of Small Business. (2004-2009). At the US Department of State, he served as Counselor for Legal Affairs to the US Ambassador At Large for US-Mexico Relations. His portfolio included inter-agency coordination on a variety of bilateral matters. (1979-1981). During his tour at the US Department of HEW he served as an Attorney-Advisor at Headquarters Office of General Counsel. His portfolio included legislation, regulations, and the administration of federal contracts and grants. (1973-1979).

Charles' private sector experience encompasses representation of businesses, chambers of commerce, foundations, trade associations, a medical school, corporate and business activities. This clientele includes start-ups, mid-sized companies, international business transactions, administrative law, contracts, grants, commercial matters, intellectual property, sustainable development, computer law, and e-commerce.

Charles received his Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Texas at Austin School of Law, (1973) and his Bachelor of Arts from UT Austin (1969). Charles was elected Treasurer of the Student Bar Association, Consul, and Permanent Class Officer. He received a Post-Doctoral Certificate in Comparative Law from the *Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara, Mexico* (1978) as an Organization of American States (OAS) Fellow. As an American Bar Association International Legal Exchange (ILEX) Scholar, he practiced law in Mexico City with the firm of *Barrera, Siqueiros y Torres Landa*. He also practiced law with the Venable firm in Baltimore, Maryland.

Charles enlisted in the US Army in an Airborne Infantry Battalion and the National Guard where he served from 1969-73. He is a member of the Dacor-Bacon House in DC, a club for former Diplomats and foreign policy professionals (currently inactive). His fluency in Spanish includes a mastery of business and government terminology. Charles is a first-generation United States Citizen born in Dallas, Texas.



Luis E. Ramirez Thomas, MSFS

Luis is the President of Ramírez Advisors Inter-National, LLC. Ramirez Advisors is a highly specialized firm dedicated to creating and implementing innovative solutions for cross-border business opportunities and improving the ability for goods and people to cross the border.

Luis has over 25 years of experience on US-Mexico border infrastructure projects, North American relations, international business and negotiations, regional economic development, industrial site selection, government procurement, project management and governmental affairs. Luis has dedicated a considerable amount of time, both personal and professional, to fostering better relations with Mexico and Canada, improving the quality of life for the residents of the border and promoting the economic development of the region.

He has led multidisciplinary teams on a number of cross-border projects, including site selection for major manufacturing facilities; design, funding and construction of new ports of entry; assisted companies in pursuing government procurement contracts; and identifying joint venture partners for a variety of business ventures.

He serves on multiple professional and charitable boards and was recently appointed to the National Advisory Council to the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency as it pertains to the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

Luis received his Bachelor of Arts and Science from the University of Arizona, Cum Laude and his Master of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University with a Dean's Citation of Service. He attended High School in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He was born in Merida, Yucatan.



Melissa (Mel) Sanderson

Melissa (Mel) Sanderson joined Freeport McMoRan in 2006 as Vice President for Africa, the number-two ranking company official for Freeport's Tenke Fungarume Mine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a greenfields project in a copper-rich southeastern province. In the DRC she was responsible for overseeing government, community and public relations affairs. After successfully ensuring the stable operations and production of the mine, she came to the company's Phoenix headquarters where she continued her involvement with the DRC while at the same time expanding her portfolio to

encompass strategic planning and coordination for corporate social, governmental and PR activities globally. With the sale of the TFM mine to China Molybdenum Corp in 2017 and Freeport's withdrawal from Africa, she assumed the title of Director for International Affairs, maintaining the same substantive responsibilities.

Before joining Freeport, Mel enjoyed an unusually diverse 21-year career with the U.S. Department of State diplomatic service including, inter alia, working in arms control, anti-narcotics and anti-terrorism and business promotion (helping U.S. companies abroad). In fact, in her first assignment in Mexico, she

was involved in attracting U.S. businesses to the then-fledgling maquiladora industry, and subsequently worked briefly with the U.S. team negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Mel is the recipient of several honors and awards in Phoenix, including: Mayor's International Businessperson of the Year 2019; Athena Award (premier private sector female) by the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce in 2015; the 25 Outstanding Women in Business by the Phoenix Business Journal in 2014, and Global Chamber's Global Businessperson of the Year in 2017.

She is on the Board of Western Rare Earths and is a Partner in the Africa Business Portal. She also Chairs the Arizona District Export Council; the Global Advisory Board of the Global Chamber; co-Chairs the Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations, and is on several Boards, including the Arizona Mexico Commission.



THE HONORABLE ALBERT C. ZAPANTA

Mr. Zapanta is President and CEO of the United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce, which operates 9 regional offices in the United States and 9 in Mexico. Mr. Zapanta is also Founder Member and Chief Executive Officer of PAZ Resources, with overall responsibilities of management of the executive staff and overall business strategy. Previously, he was Chief executive Officer of PAZ energy, a single purpose entity that participated in the DFW International Airport natural gas project. He worked in upstream operations of Atlantic Richfield Co.

(ARCO Oil & Gas), and retired as Director of Governmental Affairs for ARCO where he was responsible for negotiations with U.S. and Mexican (PEMEX) governments on oil and gas matters, and coordinated ARCO's effort to deregulate the natural gas market which became law, the Natural Gas Policy Act (NGPA). Mr. Zapanta has held numerous Presidential appointments, including White House Fellow, and Special Assistant to Secretary of U.S. Department of Transportation; Senate-confirmed Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Management and Administration, U.S. State Department Advisory Committee on International Trade Technology and Development, and private sector delegate to the U.S.-Mexico Partnership for Prosperity. Gen. Zapanta was appointed Chief of Staff of the Peacekeeping Mission to the United Nations Referendum on Western Sahara. Military officers and soldiers from the USSR, People's Republic of China, and France served under his command. U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld, appointed Gen. Zapanta as Chairman of the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB). Gen. Zapanta's military record includes the award of the Silver Star, 5 Bronze Stars for Valor, Purple Heart, and 30 other awards during the Vietnam War. He was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Restore Hope in Somalia and Restore Democracy in Haiti.

He served in the Board of Directors of Tyson Foods and currently is a member of the Board of Trustees, President Gerald R. Ford Foundation and Museum; Senior Fellow, Center for Western Hemisphere Defense Studies; Chairman, Hispanic War Veterans of America; and Chairman and CEO of the United States-Mexico Cultural and Educational Foundation.

Mr. Zapanta has a BA in Industrial Psychology, MA in Public Administration and has completed work for his PhD in International Political Economics from the University of Southern California. Mr. Zapanta graduated from the Advanced Management Program at Harvard School of Business, the Inter-American Defense College at the National War College, Washington, D.C.

In June 2018, he was elected to serve on the Irving City Council in the State of Texas, where he lives with his wife Rochelle.