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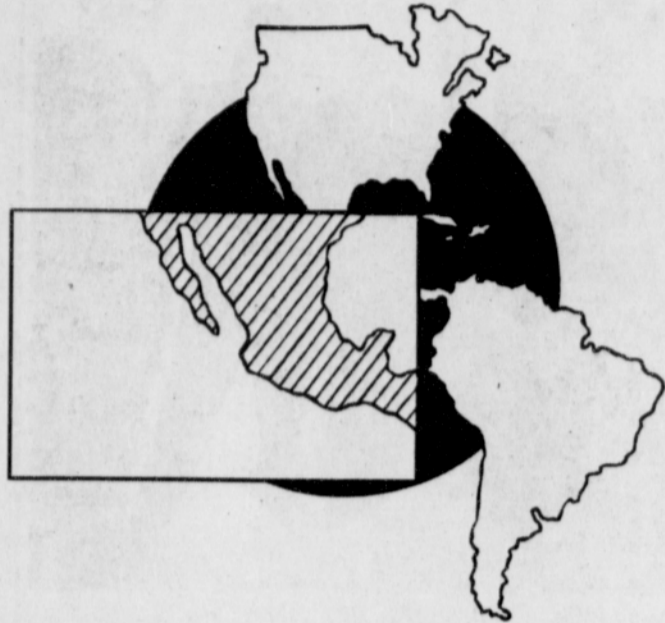
U.S. Supports 'Fast Lane' Across the U.S.-Mexican Border

MEXICOCITY (AP)—Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge said he expects the United States and Mexico to reach an agreement creating a "fast lane" of preapproved travelers across their common border, easing delays caused by heightened security after Sept. 11.

Wrapping up two days of meetings in Mexico City, Ridge said the way the United States' southern border is managed is "outdated." He added that officials were making progress on a border security accord with Mexico similar to one reached with Canada in December.

Heavy traffic at border crossings has hurt businesses both in Mexico and the United States, and Ridge called for a new plan that would use technology to clear goods in factories, rail yards and seaports instead of waiting until they reach the border.

He said customs officials were also looking at the possibility of screening and pre-approving



Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the US government is reviewing plans to increase security along the Mexican border without hurting trade relations with Mexico.

cargo and people, giving them a "fast lane" across the border.

Still, Ridge said Mexico's drug and migrant smugglers created challenges that would be difficult to overcome.

President Bush is scheduled to continue discussions on the border security plan with Mexican President Vicente Fox during the U.N. International Conference on Financing for Development later

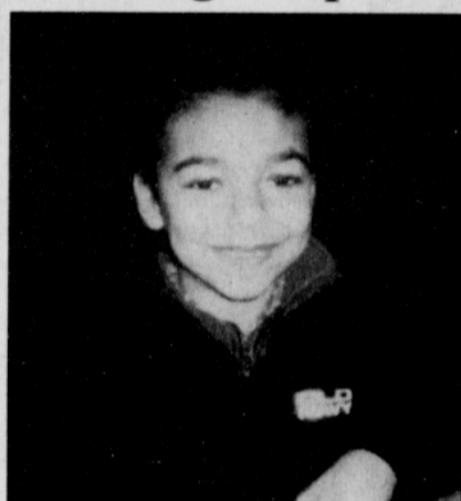
this month in Monterrey. Commerce has tripled along the U.S.-Mexican border since the start of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, and Ridge said both Mexico and the

United States aren't happy with how the border is managed today.

He said he will continue to push for consolidating agencies that manage the border — like customs and immigration services —

despite strong opposition in Washington. Ridge said Fox's government has been responsive to U.S. needs, sharing "unprecedented" amounts of information with its American counterparts.

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Minorities Have Trouble Communicating with Doctors



(AP)—Hispanics, Asians and blacks are more likely than whites to have difficulty communicating with doctors and accessing health care, a study says.

Minorities believed they would receive better care if they were of a different race, according to the survey released by the Commonwealth Fund, a private New York-based health research foundation.

"For almost every measure of quality, there is a sharp division between the health care experiences of white and minority Americans," said Karen Davis, the group's president. "As our population grows more diverse, these findings send a clear warning that the health care quality divide is in danger of turning into a gulf."

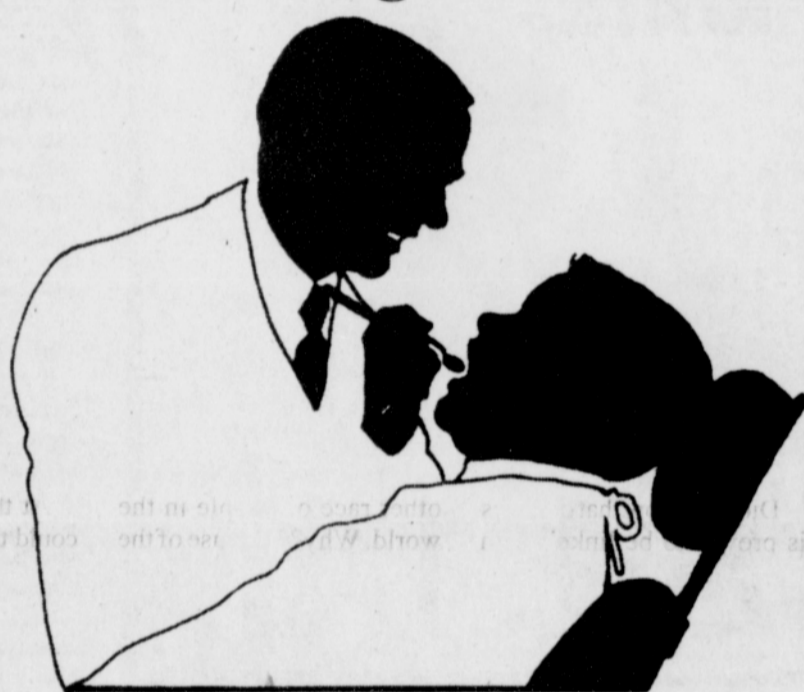
Hispanics, the nation's fastest-growing minority, were more than twice as likely as whites — 33 percent vs. 16 percent — to cite communication problems, such as failing to understand the doctor or feeling the doctor did not listen to them.

Twenty-seven percent of Asians and 23 percent of black people said they have experienced similar communication difficulties.

Access to language interpreters also was limited. Among non-English speakers who said they needed interpreters during a health care visit, fewer than half said they always or usually had one.

The survey was taken by Princeton Survey Research Associates from April to November last year. Researchers conducted telephone interviews with random nationally representative sample of 6,722 people age 18 and older. The sample included 3,488 whites, 1,153 Hispanics, 1,037 blacks and 669 Asians. The error margin for the total sample is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points, larger for subgroups.

One in six blacks, one in seven Hispanics and one in 10 Asians said



they felt they would receive better health care if they were of a different race. Only one percent of whites felt that way.

Both blacks and whites reported getting more preventive care than Hispanics and Asians.

For instance, among those age 50 and older, 18 percent of Hispanics and 16 percent of Asians said they had been screened for colon cancer in the past year. Among blacks, 31 percent said they had been screened, and 28 percent of whites said they had been screened.



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