



*League of United
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Citizens*

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PRESS RELEASE

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LULAC RESPONSE TO CONGRESSMAN SENSENBRENNER STATEMENTS

Washington, DC – The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) congratulates the people of Wisconsin and Voces De La Frontera for their successful march held on March 23, 2006. LULAC as the nation's largest and oldest Hispanic rights group was proud to participate in this event. It was clear that tens of thousands of people of many different races and religions agree that H.R. 4437 introduced by Congressman Sensenbrenner and rammed through the U.S. House of Representatives in less than two days is an unacceptable attempt at immigration reform.

H.R. 4437 simply provides greater enforcement of what is generally accepted as dated and ineffective immigration law that no longer meets the needs or upholds the ideals of our country. In addition, this bill makes felons of families that otherwise live, work, worship and pay taxes in our communities as well as persons who knowingly and unknowingly assist them.

The solution is not to further enforce poor immigration law, or create felons of those who simply want to provide for their families but to reform the entire system. This is why LULAC calls for comprehensive immigration reform that not only secures our borders, but meets our country's economic and labor needs and fulfills our country's commitment to human rights.

When the Congressman asserts that it would be unfair to those who have come here legally or who are waiting to come here, to allow undocumented workers to be "placed at the front of the line" he perpetuates one of the greatest myths in the immigration debate...that there is some line somewhere that these undocumented immigrants could get into and just wait their turn. The fact is that no such line exists and that is why comprehensive immigration reform is needed. If the Congressman insists on maintaining this line of reasoning, he should at least identify how many would be immigrant workers are in the line and how long the average wait is.

The truth is that the proposals introduced by Senators Kennedy and McCain and Congressman Kolbe, Flake and Gutierrez call for undocumented workers who are present and working in the United States to first pay any back taxes if any exist, pay a large fine and have no criminal history. They would then have to wait a total of six years before they could gain permanent residency. This hardly puts them at the front of any supposed line. This proposal also protects our communities and economy. It keeps families that are already integrated into our communities in place. It also keeps a young, motivated, trained and productive labor force working and paying local, state and federal taxes as well as into our social security system. Lastly, in keeping with the President's call to increase America's competitiveness through education, it keeps immigrant children who are already on their path to gaining a quality education here in school.

Secondly the Congressman states that "Illegal immigration is an expensive problem for law-abiding citizens. Americans and legal aliens have to pay more for police protection, for classrooms to educate our children, and for hospital and healthcare costs. This burden on the taxpayer is wrong. It undermines the economy, and it puts undue pressure on people to pay even more in taxes to pay for those who are here in America."

Contrary to Sensenbrenner's statement, study after study has demonstrated that immigrants in the United States are a huge financial boon to our country that far outweighs the amount of public benefits that they are eligible to receive. The combined value of the labor performed by immigrants along with the taxes they pay—including sales taxes, income taxes, and more—and the stimulus effect on our economy dwarfs the minimal amount that we spend on police protection, emergency medical care and public education for this hardworking population. It is one thing to pretend to forget or simply ignore the hardworking people who pick our food, make our clothes, build our homes, care for our children and our elderly, serve us at restaurants and hotels, and perform countless other essential but low-paying jobs. But is quite another to advocate for shortsighted policies that are so clearly against our own self-interest solely to make the lives of these immigrants even more difficult.

In fact, immigrants pay far more in taxes than they receive in public benefits. For example, every year undocumented immigrants pay billions of dollars of taxes into Social Security that they have no hope of ever receiving back because of their undocumented status. These payments have helped push the insolvency date of Social Security far into the future.

Undocumented immigrants pay federal, state and local taxes on income, gasoline, clothing, and other retail purchases. Economists estimate that the undocumented population pumps \$500 billion into our economy every year and pays more than \$90 billion in taxes, yet receives only about \$43 billion in public benefits. If Sensenbrenner's policies were successful and the undocumented population was suddenly deported, economists estimate that the our economy would be thrown into a severe depression as many US industries would collapse from a lack of willing workers and an inability to compete with their foreign competitors. Yet it is clear, even considering taxes alone and not the far greater value of their labor, that undocumented immigrants more than pay for themselves while strengthening our economy.

Congressman Sensenbrenner's statements and bill simply, make no sense. H.R. 4437 enforces dated and ineffective law and makes criminals of family's and those helping them. We ask everyone to contact their congressional representatives and say "no" to H.R. 4437 and yes to the principals proposed by Senator's Kennedy and McCain and Congressman Kolbe, Flake and Gutierrez.

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is the oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization in the United States. LULAC advances the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health, and civil rights of Hispanic Americans through community-based programs operating at more than 700 LULAC councils nationwide.

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