

Fall 2012 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network

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No Immigrant Bashing! Support Immigrant Rights!

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The Election Over! Where's Our Change?

Our Demands to the President Obama at the Second Term!

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Hurricane Sandy, Obama's Re-election, and the next 4 years

Vince Warren - Center for Constitutional Rights (New York, NY)

Two big things happened in the last week, and they're both going to require our attention for the next four years and beyond: the national election repudiated religious conservatives and handed Obama a second term, and Hurricane Sandy destroyed many thousands of lives.

Our allies in New Orleans and Haiti taught us the aftermath of a disaster like Sandy will last a long, long time and have far-reaching impact on things like public housing, privatization of government, and civil and human rights. We need to look ahead to hold the government accountable to a people's recovery that meets people's needs and is driven by a people's agenda guided by the principles of human rights.

Meanwhile, Obama's re-election means we need to hold the president accountable for the change we want to see. Here are the changes we will keep fighting for in Obama's second term:

- Close Guantanamo, and end torture through indefinite detention. Repatriate or resettle the men the government does not intend to prosecute, and provide fair trials for the rest
- End the use of solitary confinement in prisons across the country
- End unlawful "targeted killings" and the expansion of the Orwellian "disposition matrix." Acknowledge, investigate and provide reparations for unlawful civilian killings
- End the war in Afghanistan and pull all private military contractors out of Iraq and Afghanistan
- Abandon the endless global war paradigm as the basis for abusive national security policies and end the use of war force outside of war zones
- Investigate and prosecute former high-level U.S. officials who bear responsibility for torture and war crimes committed in Afghanistan, Iraq and the "black sites"
- Provide medical treatment and compensation to people subjected to torture in U.S.-run detention facilities, including in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Guantánamo, and provide war reparations to communities in Iraq and Afghanistan for harms done to the people and the environment
- End the persecution of whistleblowers and journalists like Julian Assange, Wikileaks and Bradley Manning for protected First Amendment activity
- Increase transparency, sunshine and freedom of information in federal law enforcement and prisons and end overclassification of unlawful or embarrassing government conduct
- Stop the criminalization of dissent: end the stifling of activist expression under the anti-free-speech National Defense Authorization Act and the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act and end overbroad prosecutions for terrorism under material support laws
- Stop the criminalization and profiling of communities based on race and religion: end the devastating Secure Communities program that destroys families and spreads fear in immigrant neighborhoods

- End warrantless surveillance and stop the indiscriminate targeting and surveillance of Muslim, Middle Eastern, and South Asian communities under the guise of national security
- Support human rights internationally: stop funding and training police and militaries abroad implicated in human rights abuses in places like Honduras
- Center women's equality in all policy and legislative initiatives concerning their bodily autonomy and right to health

We know that we cannot rely on politicians or even the courts: only people can make meaningful change. This is a critical time for all of us to act to change the course of history and build a unified vision for a society guided by human rights. Hope only gets you so far. Let's get to work.

Immigration Reform, Obama and the Struggle Ahead

FAMILIA LATINA UNIDA COMMENTARY: THE STONE OBAMA SOUGHT TO THROW AWAY BECAME THE CORNERSTONE OF HIS REELECTION...

We shared the excitement of millions in the president's victory over Romney, the Wall Street money changers and the tea party republicans to which Romney had tied himself. It was a sweet victory for humanity. We were equally excited at the nation's recognition of the demographic dawning of a new day as nearly 30% of the electorate – African American, Latino and Asian – took its place in the future of this country and determined the outcome of this election. We breathed a sigh of relief, free of Romney's threat of forced "self-deportation", and filled with the possibility of a steady transition to a just nation.

After the election, we heard the commentators and the President's spokespersons talk about the critical contribution of the strongly unified Latino vote and their note that it would continue to grow. Then we heard one after the other begin to talk about passing comprehensive immigration reform, pointing to the 65% of voters who told exit polls they favored legalization of the undocumented. The democrats joyfully pronounced the death of a Republican party which would not pass immigration reform and would gradually fade out of political relevance.

For a minute we left our senses but were quickly brought back by a couple of comments. First, one of the white house surrogates came on **MSNBC** warning sternly that we would have to "keep the left in line" as the President moved to make a new coalition with moderate Republicans and maintain control of "the center" in this country. In a flashback, we remembered that President Clinton had gone through the same process.

The midterm election in his first term had left him with Gingrich and the new right wing agenda in control of the House. After he won reelection, he set about his coalition with moderate republicans. It was a disaster that led to a welfare reform that punished Latinos, NAFTA that brought on the waves of unemployed Mexicans crossing the border to survive – and the 1996 immigration act. This 1996 immigration law is what we have been calling "the broken law" for the last fifteen years and it is the law directly responsible for millions of deportations, deaths on the desert and broken families.

Is Barack headed for this new kind of Clinton center right coalition? Everything in his history - that we in Chicago know about - would lead us to think so. Then we heard Obama policy spokesperson David Axlerod come on television.

Axlerod said that the President would make a commitment to get the congress to pass immigration reform. Then he explained how the President had tried so hard to pass immigration reform with the republicans in his first year – but the Republicans had deserted him.

In fact, Obama made a calculated political decision **not** to bring immigration reform before the Congress. His chief of staff Rahm Emanuel stated publically that "immigration reform will not happen until the second term of a democratic president – if then." Vice President Biden proclaimed in Paris that to "legalize 12 million undocumented with 10% unemployment would be political suicide."

When the economic studies that proved legalization would actually create jobs – a stimulus based on justice – the white house first agreed, prepared a press conference and then determined it "was too difficult a message to get across." Instead the President prevailed on the Democratic leadership time and time again to kill any reform bill before it could hit the floor of either house.

When the Hispanic caucus asked for a meeting to discuss just one subject – immigration reform – the President stalled them for six months, and then set up a task force which did nothing. Adding insult to injury, the President loudly proclaimed that he was excluding "illegals" from his health care proposal.

We said the President broke his promise – because he did: purposefully with conviction!

Even as he told members of congress privately that reform legislation was dead in the new republican congress he announced publically that he was working hard to get reform debated in the congress.

The plan was simple: **prevent passage of immigration reform but put the blame on the Republicans.** That would bring him the Latino vote in huge numbers – and the Obama team was all about the numbers. The Latino vote in 2012 rose to 10% of the total vote. If Romney had gotten George Bush's percentage of the Latino vote, some 40%, he would have won the election. It was clear that the immigration issue united the Latino community, largely because of a relentless fifteen year mass movement. If it had been resolved through the passage of immigration reform the Latino vote would have likely been divided much more equally because of conservative Latino opposition to abortion and gay marriage, supported both by Latino evangelicals and the Catholic hierarchy.

By deftly killing any effort to bring comprehensive immigration reform to the floor and blaming the Republicans for its failure, the white house sought to control the 70% of the Latino vote that was needed to win reelection. The White House needed to win both a high percentage AND a high turnout. The racist, Tea Party hard core in the Republican Party took the bait and the not-for-profit dominated immigrant rights movement fell in line as requested, giving the President a pass, pressing for a "down-payment legislative initiative" and, most importantly, **blaming the Republicans.**

The problem was that the Latino community saw through the charade and became so disillusioned with the "President who broke his promise" that it became clear they would withhold their votes in the next election. Evangelicals threatened to return to the republicans, citing Obama's record number of deportations. Others said they would just not vote for President.

It was then that Congressman Gutierrez took up Familia Latina Unida's demand for the President to use his executive authority to stop the deportations and give the undocumented the same temporary status that a former president had given the first Cuban exiles.

Obama resisted for a year – even calling in Latino celebrities who emerged from the White House saying, "The President doesn't have the authority to stop the deportations." The President stood in front of 4,000 Latino leaders and said, "I do not have the authority" – to which they responded with chants of "Yes you can, yes you can!" The President continued to duck the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Gutierrez' national campaign finally broke the back of the White House lie. The President admitted he did indeed have the authority to grant temporary legal status to millions. Under persistent pressure, the President initiated the policy of prosecutorial discretion to close cases of parents with U.S. citizen children. Sadly, almost immediately, Homeland Security began to minimize use of the new policy and retracted on the promise of issuing work permits.

In December of 2011, Gutierrez almost singlehandedly forced the House democratic leadership to bring up and pass the dream act in the House. Although it failed in the Senate by five democratic votes, its passage in the House set the context for intensifying the demand on the President for executive action. In March of 2012, Gutierrez brought the Familias Unidas campaign to North Carolina with a threat to mobilize at the upcoming democratic convention. Finally, reading the polls that documented Latino disaffection, Obama agreed to give temporary legal status and work permits to 1.6 million dreamers, beginning on August 15th, two and one half months before the election!

Based on the President's concession to use his executive authority, Congressman led an effort to mobilize the Latino vote to reelect the President an effort that was overwhelmingly accepted. To paraphrase the Scriptures, "The (undocumented) stones the Builder threw away, became the cornerstone of his reelection."

That is the truth about Obama's commitment to immigration reform!

Now comes the President and his surrogates talking about passing reform legislation in the Republican controlled house. It is not going to happen – although a version of the dream act has a chance. Tea Party Republicans – and Republican congressman facing reelection in two years in Tea Party districts - are just not going to let it happen. While the growing Latino vote has a powerful influence on national and statewide elections, it has little influence in congressional districts with limited or no Latino presence.

If Obama tries to take us down that road again - and attempts to hold on to the Latino vote by blaming the Republicans and delivering nothing but another two million deportations - we should not accept it. There **is** a viable alternative.

Now that we have proven that the President has the constitutional authority to grant temporary legal status and work permits to the undocumented we should make that our demand – pending the passage of a just comprehensive immigration reform. **We should demand of the President that he act on the demonstrated support of the people (now at 65%) while the**

congress is deadlocked. He should extend and expand the DACA deferments and work permits to include their parents and the parents of U.S. citizen children – and to agricultural workers as well!

Since we have made our case to the American people and we have proven that the President has the necessary authority, why should we wait while another million people are deported and hundreds of thousands of families destroyed?

There is another reason why we should demand that the President act before dragging us through a long process through in a deadlocked congress. As long as the President is continuing with mass deportations, e-verifications and up scaled border patrols that funnel migrants to the most dangerous crossings, why should the Republicans negotiate a bill for immigration reform? They are getting everything they want without it!

On the other hand, if the President gives temporary legal status and work permits to the undocumented – as was done for the first Cuban refugees – then the Republicans will have a reason to pass a bill to bring these workers under the law. But in this case, our people will be protected and we won't be tempted to accept whatever repressive, criminalizing bill they want us to pass! Most importantly, the pressure on the President will induce him to live up to his promises – for a change! Let us hope that the President will remember

THE ROAD TO COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM LEADS THROUGH A PRESIDENTIAL MORATORIUM!

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Obama's 2nd Term Mandate: Immigration Reform

ELECTION RESULTS IN WIN FOR ASPIRING CITIZENS Voters: We Support a Pro-Immigrant Agenda That Keeps Families Together

National Immigration Law Center

CHICAGO – President Barack Obama has won a second term, beating Republican challenger Governor Mitt Romney. Latinos – the fastest growing voting bloc in the nation – provided crucial votes to Obama in swing states. Asian Americans and other voters of color also played a huge role in re-electing the President. Many voted for the president's re-election not simply to support his positions, but as a rebuke to Romney's harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric. **Below is a statement from Marielena Hincapié, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center:**

"Americans have voted for a more inclusive country. Politicians on both sides of the aisle should finally realize that they can no longer scapegoat Latinos, immigrants, and other voters of color to score cheap political points among the xenophobic segments of our community without paying a price at the ballot box. President Obama, like Harry Reid two years ago, shrewdly recognized that his opponent's harsh self-deportation policies about aspiring American citizens would only serve to drive Latinos and Asian Americans to vote against extremism.

"As a result, the mandate for President Obama, along with the newly elected members of Congress, should be clear: voters want an immigration system that treats aspiring citizens with dignity, and provides a roadmap for those living and working here to integrate fully into society.

"We fully recognize that one person cannot accomplish immigration reform on his own. We expect President Obama to exert his considerable leadership to replace a system that has for too long shattered Latino and other immigrant families and for Congress to come to the table. We will no longer tolerate status quo of record deportations and aggressive detention policies, and politicians on both sides of the aisle should recognize that if they adhere to these draconian positions, their political future is at risk. The demographic writing is on the wall: Republicans and Democrats alike should begin working now toward creating an inclusive society in the future, or risk losing the heart of future American voters."

The Obama Administration has an ambitious agenda, and many of their policies will have a profound effect on immigrants' lives. Here are a few of the most important issues affecting immigrants today:

- **Immigration reform.** Though President Obama has reiterated his support for immigration reform to Univision and the Des Moines Register, precious little has been said about how he would achieve such reform. Immigrant families have suffered under record breaking deportations; we must not allow these detention and deportation systems to continue to destroy immigrant communities simply because both parties cannot agree on how best to create a roadmap to citizenship for the men and women who are American in their hearts, if not by their papers.

- **Immigrant access to health care.** The Obama administration should continue to implement the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in as robust a fashion as possible, and any effort to reform our broken immigration system must protect access to existing affordable care options for newly authorized immigrants. This includes repealing an ill-advised rule excluding young immigrants granted a reprieve from deportation under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

- **Preventing family separation.** Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents should finally begin adhering to the memos issued by the administration that outline when an individual should be allowed to return to his or her family rather than undergo deportation proceedings. Currently, many individuals who should not be deported under the guidance are banished from the United States, often leaving loved ones and children behind.

- **Promoting economic justice for all workers and their families.** Working immigrant families have the most to lose under sequestration budget negotiations that will take place in the coming months. President Obama and Congress must protect critical safety-net programs, including the Child Tax Credit and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), which help lift millions of families out of poverty each year.

- **Promoting a level playing field for all workers.** Ensure that abusive employers don't use immigration status to thwart labor rights or to gain competitive advantage over workers by vigorously enforcing the agreement between the Department of Labor and Department of Homeland Security to ensure that workplace immigrant apprehension and detention doesn't undermine labor standards enforcement.

11/8: MAKE THE CALL, SIGN THE PETITION TO SUPPORT SERGIO - It's a matter of life or death!

ROC United [New York, NY] This week, there were some great victories for workers, immigrants, the LGBT community, and more BUT the work for us and for the people we fight for continues.

One of our leaders of the Dignity at Darden campaign in Los Angeles has been in an ICE detention facility since May of this year. Sergio is a ROC-LA member, a gay man living with AIDS, who was recently diagnosed with cancer. Doctors found a tumor in his head - but Sergio is not getting the medical treatment he needs.

Please take a minute to sign this petition: <http://action.dreamactivist.org/california/sergio/>

Sergio was told he needs chemotherapy as soon as possible but he is not getting the treatment he needs in detention. His health is deteriorating rapidly, and without the proper treatment Sergio could die soon. Santa Ana City Jail has a record of abuses of gay and transgender detainees, delays in medical care, and reports of mistreatment. Sergio needs to be released immediately!

Please take a minute to sign the petition, share it with others, and make a call to ICE!

Call ICE – John Morton @ 202-732-3000

Sample Script: "Hi, I am calling to urge ICE to release Sergio Vazquez Gutierrez (A# 200-243-222) from the Santa Ana City Jail in California. Sergio was recently diagnosed with cancer and a tumor in his head. He needs immediate surgery to remove the tumor before it's too late. Sergio must be released from detention to get the treatment he urgently needs. Let him go!"

11/6: Economy and immigration are top issues to Latino voters in 2012 election

Latino Decisions

The ImpreMedia-Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll of 5,600 Latino voters has indicated that the Economy/Jobs and Immigration were the most important issues to Latino voters in 2012. As indicated in the figure below, 53% of Latino voters nationally who were surveyed during the final days of the campaign indicate that the Economy and Jobs was the most important issue facing the Latino community, with 35% of Latino voters indicating that Immigration was the most important issue. This is reflective of what we have found in our polls throughout the entire campaign season, as the economy and immigration have consistently been identified as the dominant issues among Latino voters. Education (20%) and healthcare (14%) were also identified by a large number of Latino voters. Click here if you would like to see how policy importance varies by key demographic factors, such as gender, national origin, and partisanship.

The most important issue content of the national survey is the first of several posts that will provide exclusive insights into the 2012 Latino electorate including Presidential and Congressional vote choice and party evaluations. Latino Decisions will announce and post updates via Twitter, this blog, our 2012 Election Eve Poll page, as well as a new webpage we have created specifically for our election eve survey results.

11/8: New Mexico, Border Election Highlights and Hassles

Frontera NorteSur: on-line, U.S.-Mexico border news

Like the majority of U.S. voters, New Mexicans handed President Barack Obama another four-year term this week and returned control of the Senate to the Democrats, with the victory of Democrat Martin Heinrich over former Republican Congresswoman Heather Wilson in the New Mexico race helping seal the national deal.

Nonetheless, the composition of the state's House delegation remained unchanged, staying at two Democrats and one Republican, though Albuquerque's Michelle Lujan Grisham will be the new Democratic face on Capitol Hill. The GOP's Steve Pearce will go back to Washington as the representative of more conservative south-central and eastern New Mexico after handily defeating Democratic challenger Evelyn Madrid Erhard of Las Cruces.

A smattering of voting problems surfaced on election day, especially long wait times that exceeded two hours or more in some places. Long voter lines in the GOP stronghold of Rio Rancho outside Albuquerque, home of a big Intel manufacturing plant, prompted a visit by Republican Governor Susana Martinez, while lengthy wait times were also reported at the University of New Mexico and Van Buren Middle School, a Duke City voting site located in a heavily working-class and immigrant neighborhood, among several places.

Oriana Sandoval, executive director of the non-profit organization New Mexico Vote Matters, said finger-pointing followed the Rio Rancho voting hold-up, making it unclear whether problems over staffing and election equipment were the fault of the Sandoval County Clerk or the New Mexico Secretary of State. "They way underestimated the turn-out," Sandoval said in a phone interview with FNS. "I'm not sure where the blame lays."

In most places, Sandoval judged the election process as generally "fantastic," but said she did get a call from a predominantly Spanish-speaking voter in Albuquerque who complained about not being listed on the voter rolls when she went to vote and being improperly asked for identification and a Social Security number.

"Basically, they gave her a provisional ballot and she was upset," Sandoval said.

In southern New Mexico, the Border Network for Human Rights (BNHR) denounced long waits and alleged denials of translation services at a fire station voting site in Chaparral, a large unincorporated community that overlaps Dona Ana and Otero counties in New Mexico and El Paso County across the state line in Texas.

Teresa Nevarez, director of the BNHR's center in Anthony, New Mexico, said she showed up at the Chaparral fire station at about 6:30 pm on election night to find the place "swamped with people" and not enough poll workers to handle the crowd.

An offer from the BNHR to help with legally-guaranteed voter translation assistance was denied by a poll worker who consulted with an on-site election judge, Nevarez told FNS. She blasted the scene as an "outrage" for Chaparral, where many people speak Spanish- a language with an older history in New Mexico than English.

"It's intolerable that things like this are going on in heavily Hispanic areas and Otero County," Nevarez contended, adding that she did not hear of similar voting troubles in Dona Ana County.

Chaparral voter Illiana Macias told FNS she showed up at the site at 5:30 pm and waited until 9:30 pm to vote. Her husband missed class because of the delay, she said.

"People were starting to leave left and right," the young woman said, recalling that she tried to convince people to stay in line until provisional ballots came. She estimated 100-200 people who were unable to vote quickly got frustrated and left. The Chaparral resident said it took her 10-15 minutes to vote four years ago, but didn't understand why it took four hours to vote this year.

Macias said she observed unused voting booths, and was told by an unidentified woman to stop videotaping the scene and handing out cards the voter made with a 1-800 number to report election problems. Seconding Nevarez, Macias charged that no poll workers were translating for Spanish speakers or allowing others the opportunity to do so.

Apparently confused about where to vote after driving around Otero County, one family eventually left because "nobody was there to translate for them," according to Macias. "I just want this exposed," Macias said. "I stayed in line until I got my vote. I wish everybody else would have had this opportunity."

Reached late on election night, Dona Ana County Clerk Lynn Ellis attributed some of the Chaparral problems to people trying to vote in a county in which they were not registered. He said his office was helping the Otero County Clerk's Office by sending envelopes to Chaparral so provisional ballots could be collected.

Spanning three counties and two states, Chaparral is a relatively isolated, rural community where boundaries are nebulous.

In a phone interview with FNS, Otero County Clerk Robyn Holmes said that 24 provisional ballots which were collected at the Chaparral fire station would be counted on November 7 and 8. Holmes said the voting delay at the Chaparral fire station, which didn't conclude until 11 pm- four hours after the line was officially cut-off -was due to overwhelming voter interest and the inclusion of constitutional amendments and bond proposals that take extra time to read through and understand.

"(Voters) turned out in droves," Holmes said. "We haven't had so many people turn out in a while...we had a great voter turnout. I'm so glad people got out to vote."

Otero County's chief election official said 57 percent of the 33,400 voters registered in her county turned out. Long election day lines were a statewide problem, Holmes said, mentioning the governor's appearance in Rio Rancho where voters were given pizza and water to hold them over until they reached the ballot box.

In terms of avoiding future voting hang-ups in Chaparral, Holmes said "it happens every time" in the sprawling community.

"I really don't know what the solution would be," she said, adding that letters were sent from her office telling all registered voters precisely where they should cast their ballots.

"We try to get (correct information) to each of these voting individuals...at a certain point, these individuals have to take responsibility."

To the best of her knowledge, the Chaparral fire station had Spanish-speaking poll workers and nobody was denied translation services, Holmes said.

The BNHR's Teresa Nevarez said her group was discussing whether to file a complaint with New Mexico Secretary of State Diana Duran over the Chaparral situation.

Active on immigration and border security issues, the BNHR engaged in a get-out-the-vote campaign in the southern New Mexico and El Paso areas this year. According to Cristina Parker, BNHR communications director, the group made more than 6,000 phone calls, knocked on 2,300 doors, registered 50 new voters and helped 150 people in the citizenship process in southern New Mexico alone.

Oriana Sandoval added that New Mexico Vote Matters got 17,000 voters on the 2012 rolls. And the number might have been higher if English-language voter registration forms available to third-party organizations had not run out in July-almost three months before the New Mexico voter registration deadline, according to Sandoval.

Sandoval praised the early voting process, and credited the Dona Ana and Bernalillo county clerks' offices for "tremendous support" in encouraging voter involvement. The activist said her group is discussing whether to continue after the election. "There are tons of civic engagement to do year round," Sandoval said. "If you want to be more effective, you can't do it on a four-year cycle."

Back in the key New Mexico political races, the State Senate and House retained Democratic majorities, but longtime politician, rancher and Senate President Pro-Tem Tim Jennings, a prime political target of Governor Martinez's camp, lost his conservative Roswell area district to Republican opponent Cliff Pirtle, a 27-year-old farmer. Another Martinez adversary, State Senate Majority Whip Mary Jane Garcia from Dona Ana County, also went down in defeat.

On the other hand, a onetime Martinez ally in the contentious driver's licenses for undocumented persons battle, farmer and State Rep Andy Nunez of Hatch, lost his seat to LULAC activist and Democrat Phillip Archuleta. A former Democrat, Nunez left the party and became an independent after he sponsored legislation that would bar undocumented immigrants from getting state driver's licenses. Despite Nunez's role in the ongoing driver's licenses fray, Governor Martinez reportedly backed the Republican candidate in the three-way race that Archuleta won.

An Albuquerque ballot initiative raising the local minimum wage from \$7.50 to \$8.50 per hour by January 1, 2013, passed by nearly a 2-1 margin; the measure also provides for graduated increases in the minimum wage paid to tipped workers.

Neighboring El Paso, meanwhile, held to its tradition of bucking Texas' red political trends and went with Obama. The

Democratic candidate for the U.S. House, Beto O'Rourke, son-in-law of banker, real estate magnate and border developer William Sanders, easily won over Republican Barbara Carrasco.

And in three controversial ballot propositions, El Pasoans approved quality of life bonds for downtown redevelopment and voted to make tourists pay a higher hotel tax in order to fund the construction of a new minor league baseball stadium where city hall now sits. Although legal challenges to the city hall demolition and stadium construction are still pending, downtown El Paso's streets and skyline are set for makeovers in the coming months.

In another closely-watched contest, El Paso Democrat Joe Moody took back a see-saw State House seat from Republican Dee Margo. The race earlier sparked upheaval within the state Democratic Party after two other El Paso Democratic House members, Naomi Gonzalez and Marisa Marquez, made statements in support of Republican Margo.

The Mexican press devoted great attention to the U.S elections, with national media putting it front and center of the news cycle. Regional publications like El Diario, Norte and La Polaka in Ciudad Juarez ran numerous articles on the El Paso and New Mexico elections. Mexican press stories emphasized the pivotal Latino role in Obama's victory, voter endorsement of marijuana legalization in Colorado and Washington state, local El Paso races and the Chaparral voting situation, among other stories.

"Obama, Baseball and Legalization" headlined Lapolaka's website.

11/7: L.A. council approves ID cards for city residents

The cards could be used by illegal immigrants to open bank accounts, borrow library books and pay utility bills. There would also be a separate debit card feature that users could pre-load with cash

Catherine Saillant, Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles City Council members Wednesday gave enthusiastic backing to the creation of a controversial city identification card that could be used by illegal immigrants to open bank accounts, borrow library books and pay utility bills. Councilman Ed Reyes called it a way for the city's poorest workers to "come out into the light."

While the federal government has failed to pass immigration reform, the city of Los Angeles is able to manage its own affairs, said Councilman Richard Alarcon, who along with Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is a chief sponsor of the card plan.

An ID card that would allow as many as 400,000 residents who now live in a cash economy to access banking services and learn the intricacies of finance is beneficial to everyone, Alarcon said, not just undocumented immigrants, who are expected to be the main benefactors.

The 12-1 vote to pursue selecting a vendor to develop and administer the identity card program was a bittersweet victory for Alarcon, who is serving his last term on the council. On Tuesday, voters rejected his bid for a state Assembly seat, leaving him with no public office after next June for the first time in 19 years.

The photo ID would be available to any resident of the city, regardless of immigration status. Holders could use the card not only as identification but to check out library books, pay bills, make reservations and use city job centers.

The cards would also carry a separate debit card feature that users could pre-load with cash. Oakland, Richmond and San Francisco already have similar cards.

Opponents of illegal immigration have lambasted the cards as an accommodation to lawbreakers. But no one spoke in opposition to the Los Angeles initiative Wednesday.

An array of speakers from civil rights, labor and ethnic organizations urged the council to move forward. Betty Hung, policy director at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, said a municipal identification card would ease hurdles for immigrants. For instance, she said, some schools won't release kids into the custody of someone who has no identification.

"Many parents have difficulty picking their children up from school because they don't have IDs," she said.

10/12: Anti-Latino Laws Ignite The South

In its original format, Alabama's Beason-Hammon Act granted school resource officers the right to badger 5th graders on the basis of their immigration status. The state of Alabama, which passed the Beason-Hammon Act (or HB 56) in June of 2011, was the only state in the country requiring public school administrators to verify immigration data for new K-12 students.

However, just two months ago in August of this year, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the student provision of HB 56, declaring it unconstitutional and a legal breach of Plyer vs. Doe, which mandates that states provide an education to all children, regardless of their immigration status. The 11th Circuit also struck down Georgia's HB 87, a state proposal to criminalize the "transporting and harboring of illegal immigrants," a statute with anti-Latino written all over it, a proposal with no parallel within the U.S. system of federal law.

These recent rulings were key in dispelling the notion that individual states can create their own immigration regulations, bypassing federal authority. When initially proposed, Alabama's HB 56 along with Georgia's HB 87, were sold as valuable pieces of legislation that would boost local economies – laws that would crack down on the presence of those entering the U.S. illegally. Conservatives billed such bigotry as a quick fix to unemployment and poorly performing schools. Instead, such rogue policies were a complete setback to Civil Rights and due process. In Alabama, children of all ages were deterred from attending school and pursuing their education. Many withdrew out of fear that their families could be deported if questioned about their immigration status. According to the U.S. Justice Department, over 13% of Latino children withdrew over the one year HB 56 operated before federal intervention. Instead of teaching Geometry, classroom instructors were fishing for birth certificates.

As for those local economies and decreasing unemployment rates, Alabama's number one industry, Agriculture, was damn near decimated. We're talking an agricultural sector accustomed to generating over \$5.5 billion per year. Industries dependent upon migrant labor, like Alabama's poultry operations, were devastated. Small farming operations were brought to a halt, as valuable workers were scared indoors. Others simply migrated for the purpose of mere safety. Such complications have also been used as justification for not paying temporary workers – hired and fired a month later, and with no pay to show for it. Many Latinos have refused to report crimes, whether legal or undocumented, any potential scrutiny by local law enforcement could initiate an ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) investigation.

Though portions of these bills were repealed, human rights supporters have continued to sound the alarm, for this branding of social control affects all poor and oppressed people – creating fear and frustration through alienation. Recently, the state of Alabama has challenged the ruling of the 11th Circuit's three-judge panel and has asked for a new hearing. Though particular provisions were found to be outright unconstitutional, a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, state officials are arguing that federal courts overstepped state jurisdiction. Unfortunately, it seems that like Arizona, Alabama is positioning itself to take its immigration law all the way to the Supreme Court. For those of us who are U.S. History buffs, one can't help but draw a direct correlation to Governor George Wallace's stand against federal authorities in the 1960's. His hard-line for segregation against the U.S. Supreme Court aroused racists nationwide.

In addition to federal judges, HB 56 has also caught the attention of President Obama. Even Barack has gone on record stating that "it's a bad law." But then again, the Obama Administration deported 396,000 immigrants last year.

While members of congress, federal judges and state legislators continue to debate, human rights defenders applaud what little progress has been made. We know damn well however, that those of us who despise such racist bigotry must continue to raise our voices. Deleting a few provisions isn't going to be enough here, not while racial profiling still runs rampant. When traffic stops and roadblocks become immigrant obstacle courses, ethics become a serious matter of legal concern. If justice fails to prevail in this case, such structural hate could begin to blanket the entire southern Black Belt, setting new precedents for states like South Carolina, Georgia and Arkansas.

In response to this year long battle, Immigrants Rights activists have stayed the course. Protestors have deployed an array of tactics such as rallies and community forums, teach-ins and street blockades. DREAM activists and immigrant youth have conducted walk-outs. Workers and adult cooperatives have organized major strikes. Latino customers have chosen to boycott local businesses, while tens of thousands have convened in solidarity. Organizations as the United Steelworkers Union, ACLU and Immigrant Justice League have joined forces. The NAACP and Southern Poverty Law Center are also on board. Ironically, Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church has served as a rest haven and planning headquarters, the same church bombed by racists in 1963.

The bottom line is that HB 56 is a law that continues to ostracize and divide, conjuring fear, heightening the level of innocent victims and false arrests – perpetuating a complete violation of civil liberties. These anti-Hispanic acts aren't merely a matter of disenfranchisement. Latino immigrants are being denied the right to even exist in some states, to barely breathe without some "officer of the law" riding their backs with an iron boot. True, the recent rulings by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals are great, but there should be no compromise with laws that encourage hate. For those of us who are abreast of such racist regulations, let us spread the word and continue to organize. For those of you who are learning of such injustice for the first time, join the movement's noble cause. We the People say, "freedom for all," and down with HB 56!

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