Bad Border Bill Sailing Through Congress, Bush Pushes His “Compassionate” Anti-Immigrant Agendas
Commentary and Action Appeal from National Immigrant Solidarity Network

Although Congress was out of session for the Thanksgiving holiday, they have vowed to have a full vote on the Border Security and Terrorism Prevention Act the week of December 12. It is very important to express opposition to this bill – right now, and this bill may get even worse before it gets better. And U.S. Rep. John Culberson, a Texas Republican, is pushing legislation to create a citizen border patrol whose members would be deputized to make arrests and authorized to carry guns.

President Bush, on the other hand, once again along with the Congress, spinning his rhetoric from the failure war in Iraq, to blaming the immigrants for all the World’s problems.

For much of the past five years, President Bush has sought to smooth the edges of the national immigration debate with the sentimental observation that "family values don't stop at the Rio Grande River." He has lamented the suffering inflicted by illegal border crossings and celebrated the migrants’ contributions to the U.S. economy. But during his visit to the border this week, the president tucked away his compassionate conservatism and strutted his stuff as a tough-talking lawman determined to bring order to the 1,950-mile U.S.-Mexico border.

He showed far more willingness to crack down at the country's edge, however, than to demand that employers, whose jobs draw migrants northward, comply with the law – which many believe is essential for successful immigration reform. Here are some of the provisions of the bill draft by the Congress:
* The Department of Homeland Security must develop a comprehensive border security plan in the next six months that will increase the use of technology, infrastructure, and manpower at the border.
* The bill puts terrorists and undocumented migrants in the same category, saying that this new plan must respond to both threats equally.
* Put 8,000 new Border Patrol Agents on our borders
* The Department of Defense must develop a plan to allow the Border Patrol to more fully take advantage of its resources. It includes unmanned aerial vehicles, radars, surveillance equipment and "assistance" in conducting surveillance activities.
* Requires Homeland Security to develop a plan for securing national parks, forests, and other recreational areas along the border. This would give them increased authority on environmentally sensitive lands.
* Mandates the detention and deportation of all undocumented migrants. If they are released pending a court date, they must take out a minimum bond of $5,000. This will basically increase the jailing of migrants.
* Transfer the authority of the Tohono O’odham Shadow Wolves (the reservation’s police force that addresses migration issues) to the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Take Actions! Contact President Bush and your congressional representatives today!

For more updates information, please visit our webpage: http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org

(Source: UFW, Copley News Service, Latin America Working Group)
Nov 18 Immigration Policy Update and Action Alert: Senate Reform Bill Circulated
National Immigration Forum

Senate Judiciary Committee Draft Bill Fails to Include Solution for the Undocumented
Last week, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-PA) submitted to his Committee an immigration reform bill that will serve as the starting point for what the Judiciary Committee will consider. The bill combines provisions from the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act (the Kennedy/McCain bill), the Comprehensive Enforcement and Immigration Reform Act (the Cornyn/Kyl bill), and a package of reform bills recently introduced by Senator Hagel (R-NE) and briefly summarized in our last update.

Unexpectedly, the “Chairman’s Mark,” as this draft is called, contains no provision for a path to citizenship for the undocumented residing in the U.S. Instead, it virtually mirrors the “report to deport” treatment contained in the Cornyn/Kyl bill. While Senator Specter circulated this draft within the Judiciary Committee with a cover letter saying that he did not necessarily “endorse” all of the provisions in the draft, it is unsettling that the Senate is starting with a reform bill that, because of this major omission, does not meet the minimum requirements for comprehensive immigration reform.

The bill apparently also contains no accommodation for undocumented immigrant students that would be legalized by the DREAM Act. There are other provisions of the bill that are positive, including reform of the admissions system to allow for the greater future flow of workers and family members.

Process note: Going forward, it will be this draft, not the Kennedy/McCain bill or the Cornyn/Kyl bill, that will be considered in the Judiciary Committee, the committee that has jurisdiction over immigration. Committee members will consider and amend the bill in one or more meetings. Chairman Specter has said that he expects to consider the bill late in January or in February of next year. The next stop after the bill is voted out of Judiciary Committee is the Senate floor, where it will again be subject to amendments.

Action: Contact the Senate Judiciary Committee
We need to let Chairman Specter and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee know that immigration reform without a solution for the undocumented is not acceptable. Please fax a letter from your organization, or make a call to Chairman Specter or to your senator, if he or she is on the Judiciary Committee.

The telephone number of the Senate Judiciary Committee is (202) 224-5225. The fax number is (202) 224-9102.

Contact information for members of the Judiciary Committee can be found here: http://judiciary.senate.gov/members.cfm

When you are making calls, here are a few of the key points you can make:

- I am calling about comprehensive immigration reform legislation to be considered in the Judiciary Committee early next year.
- Successful reform must realistically address the existence of 11 million undocumented immigrants working and living in the United States.
- That means there must be a path to permanent residence for undocumented immigrants.
- Requiring undocumented immigrants to “report to deport” is not realistic, and will not work.
- A “report to deport” requirement will leave us with millions of undocumented immigrants still living in the shadows, unknown to our government, and vulnerable to exploitation.
- These workers have strong ties to our country, and we need them. They need some way to come out of the shadows and become full-fledged members of our society.

Analysis: Bush immigration plan bolsters border but glosses over employers
By Jerry Kammer
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE
November 30, 2005

WASHINGTON – For much of the past five years, President Bush has sought to smooth the edges of the national immigration debate with the sentimental observation that "family values don't stop at the Rio Grande River." He has lamented the suffering inflicted by illegal border crossings and celebrated the migrants' contributions to the U.S. economy.

But during his visit to the border this week, the president tucked away his compassionate conservatism and strutted his stuff as a tough-talking lawman determined to bring order to the 1,950-mile U.S.-Mexico border.
He showed far more willingness to crack down at the country’s edge, however, than to demand that employers, whose jobs draw migrants northward, comply with the law – which many believe is essential for successful immigration reform.

"We want to make it clear that when people violate immigration laws, they're going to be sent home, and they need to stay at home," Bush declared Monday in Tucson.

The change in tone is widely seen as part of a carefully calibrated strategy to reconcile rival Republican factions. This clash pits cultural conservatives, who warn that the surging numbers of poor immigrant workers are becoming a new and potentially destabilizing underclass, against business conservatives, who say low-wage immigrant labor is essential to economic growth.

To the former, the president is promising the rule of law. To the latter, he is offering a guest-worker plan to provide a continuous flow of low-wage labor to job sites nationwide whenever an American doesn't step up to work for the going wage.

Bush devoted most of his comments in Tucson and yesterday in El Paso, Texas, to administration efforts to harden the border: more Border Patrol agents, more high-tech detection, more efficient deportation of non-Mexican immigrants, whose numbers have surged recently.

But Doris Meissner, former immigration commissioner under President Clinton, said Bush failed to face up to the need for firm controls among the nation's 8.5 million employers. "I don't know if there is any other answer than to be far more serious about not only border enforcement but also interior enforcement," Meissner said.

Without a determination to clamp down on employers willing to flout the law, Meissner warns, the president's guest-worker program would easily be skirted by illegal immigrants lured north by illegal employers.

Although Bush said he was committed to more interior enforcement, he was short on details. He showed no enthusiasm for the tough work-site regulation that many immigrant advocates say is essential in order to win public support for the broad legalization they want.

In the eyes of immigrant advocate Angela Kelley, Bush was unrealistic in proposing to allow illegal immigrants currently in the United States to work for up to six years, after which they would be required to return to the homeland they fled.

"They're not going to leave," said Kelley, assistant director of the National Immigration Forum. She said six years is plenty of time to put down roots, develop attachments and give birth to new American citizens.

"They would go back to an undocumented state, and we would end up with an even bigger illegal immigrant population than we have now," Kelley said.

That scenario, of course, summons the specter of the last major overhaul of immigration policy, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. Passed after five years of debate, that act sought to balance the compassion of large-scale amnesty with the toughness of employer sanctions intended to counteract the jobs magnet.

It left a legacy that shadows the current debate in Congress. The reform act resulted in immigration networks that expanded as 3 million persons claimed amnesty and summoned their relatives – and the nation's illegal immigration population grew to 11 million.

This time, immigrant advocates say, any new reform needs to couple legalization with a serious commitment to enforcement. Skeptics doubt that there is a commitment to that unpleasant and complicated task.

When Congress returns next week, the House is expected to take up legislation to tighten the border. And the Senate leadership has pledged to consider proposals early next year for an ambitious legalization program.

Intense debate is expected over a bill proposed by Sens. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and John McCain, R-Ariz., that would provide not only "earned" legalization, but also offer a path to citizenship. The debaters will be mostly Republican, as Democrats overwhelmingly favor the sweeping legalization backed by labor unions, ethnic organizations and church groups. Mark Krikorian, director of the restrictionist Center for Immigration Studies, says the decisive action could take place in a House-Senate conference committee called to reconcile the differing versions of reform legislation.

"If there is a conference committee, the White House would try to use its muscle to get house conferees to swallow a guest-worker program," he said. For Bush, this means a lot of heavy lifting on immigration in the coming year. The speeches this week in the Southwest gave him a chance to flex a little muscle before he tackles that job in earnest.
Playing Rough
The anti-immigration Minuteman Project set off an avalanche of imitators. Some of them are downright frightening.

By Susy Buchanan and David Holthouse
Intelligence Report
URL: http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/
Fall 2005

Trigger happy," Goliad County, Texas, Sheriff Robert DeLaGarza thought to himself. It was early July and DeLaGarza was meeting with members of the Texas Minuteman Corps, a new vigilante border patrol outfit that started recruiting in DeLaGarza's county in June.

"They kept talking a lot about shooting illegals, and what they could and couldn't do to make it self-defense of life or property," DeLaGarza said. "One woman kept asking, 'Well, what if they reach for a rock, can we shoot them then? What if they're on private land? Can we shoot them for trespassing?'"

DeLaGarza gave the vigilantes a stern warning: "My community doesn't tolerate racism or racist violence in any form. I told them that if they step one inch out of line, I'm going to hammer their ass."

Later that month in California, two Mexicans were wounded in separate shootings the same night along a 14-mile stretch of the border between Campo and Tecate, Calif., that was being patrolled by the California Minutemen, another new vigilante border patrol group.

Both shootings occurred in the early hours of Saturday, July 23.

The first victim told investigators he was leading a group of illegal immigrants through the desert and was about 200 yards inside the United States when he heard a distant rifle shot and was struck in the buttocks by a single bullet. The second shooting took place one hour later. A group of eight adults and two children said they were huddled about 20 yards south of the border when a man wearing a mask and carrying a rifle suddenly appeared. When they ran, he fired a single shot, striking one of the men in the back of the leg.

Interviewed in the hospital by The San Diego Union-Tribune, the victim in the second shooting, 32-year-old Jose Humberto Rivera Perez of Guadalajara, disputed the claim by American and Mexican police that the gunman was most likely a bandit.

"If he were a bandit, he would have grabbed us and taken everything," Perez said. "He only shot at us and ran."

Humberto Garcia, the Tijuana-based regional coordinator for the Mexican government's National Human Rights Commission, said he feared the attack was either carried out or instigated by members of the California Minutemen, who he called cazamigrantes - "immigrant hunters."

"With this kind of operation, they are feeding feelings of hatred," Garcia said.

"These feelings of hatred can inspire acts of violence like this. It's very strange that these acts are occurring in this context. We're not discarding any possibilities until the authorities find out who did this, one way or the other."

The identity of the shooters may never be known. But this much is certain: a chaotic army of cazamigrantes is on the march.

Immigrant Hunters
Inspired by the Minuteman Project, the month-long, much-hyped vigilante action held in Arizona last April, more than 40 anti-immigration "citizens border patrol" and "internal vigilance" groups have formed since early May. The original Minuteman Project's leaders, Jim Gilchrist and Chris Simcox, have little or no control over most of these splinters, spin-offs and imitators.

Some are based in states with no Mexican borders to patrol. In Alabama, a group calling itself the Alabama Minutemen Support Team has pledged to recruit and train 125 "undocumented border patrol agents" for an October mission in New Mexico led by former antigovernment militia commander Mike Vanderboegh. Other Minuteman groups in non-border states
seem less focused on patrolling the border than generalized immigrant bashing. In Tennessee, members of a group calling itself the Tennessee Volunteer Minutemen has been staking out day labor sites, harassing workers. The Utah Minutemen recently protested outside a bank in Salt Lake City that accepts Mexican consular identification cards for check-cashing purposes. And the Colorado Minutemen in July sponsored a demonstration outside the Denver Public Library to demand the removal of Mexican comic books from the shelves.

Minuteman groups have also formed in Maine, Michigan and Washington, and have announced plans to patrol the Canadian border this fall to protect America from invaders from the north. In Mobile, Ala., one Minuteman has taken it upon himself to ensure the Gulf waters are clear of invaders - by patrolling the seas armed with a Glock and an M-16.

But it is clearly along the southern border where Minutemen have the highest numbers of participants and the most militant supporters. Five of these spin-off groups are among the most important. (To read the rest of the report, please visit: http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport)

Media Bias Against Immigrant Communities

Koreatown Episode of CBS Crime Drama "Without a Trace" Stirs Controversy and an Angry Asian Man
Asian Media Watch
URL: http://www.AsianMediaWatch.net
November 15, 2005

Take your typical drama set in "Chinatown" with sweatshop workers and mail-order brides, and then replace it with a Korean grocery. Next add in a Korean American woman who only dates "all Caucasian men", whose "friends are all white" and who might be a promiscuous sexual deviant/sado-masochist. Add in her meek brother, overbearing parents bound to traditional Korean customs, and her ex-fiancée who's an in-the-closet gay. Then throw in a couple of Black actors to rob her parent's Korean grocery just to remind us of the LA Riots and past ethnic strife ... and what do you get? The recent episode of the CBS hit crime drama "Without a Trace" entitled "Honor Bound".

Last year, AMW told you about the NBC Law & Order SVU Chinatown episode "Debt" with an immigrant sweatshop, street vendor, and mail-order brides. Since then, how many good portrayals have we seen with a large cast of APAs, the rare APA male lead, a 2nd/3rd/Nth generation progressive APA family of professionals? Granted that there are APAs who work in fast food restaurants in "real life", and there is nothing wrong with running a Korean grocery. But when will we see more diverse roles for APAs, women, and other underrepresented groups that reflect the American landscape beyond episodes set in Chinatowns/K-Town, with immigrant families, or with "geeks and geishas"?

Why wasn't the grocery store customer a Black actor who thanks the Korean grocer for staying open late, for charging lower prices, or staying open during an East Coast blizzard instead of robbing them? The former happens in reality ... a lot. I've seen it. But that wouldn't be good "drama". At least there weren't any kung-fu fighting Asian villians, and there were some characters who spoke clear English, and a decent plot. But are such episodes good or bad for Asian Pacific America, and are things getting better, worse, or remaining the same? So watch the video clips and tell us what you think: http://www.asianmediawatch.net/withoutatrace/

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IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY NETWORK CALLS FOR IMMIGRANTS FOR PEACE & JUSTICE CAMPAIGNS

The immigrant communities had increasingly become one of the fastest growing targets for the U.S. military recruiters. With the “promises” of citizenships and show your “patriotism,” many new comers were tricked to join the army to fight the unjust wars of Afghanistan and Iraq. Many injured even killed.

Some 37,000 men and women - or about 3 percent of the total active duty force - are non-citizens, up from 28,000 five years ago. Many immigrants enter the military in the hopes it will speed up citizenship applications. Many, however, only become full-fledged Americans only after their deaths at the combats. Currently, at least several dozen new immigrants killed in Iraq and Afghanistan before they achieve their American dreams.

We are calling for a national formation of immigrant counter-recruitment coalition, to link military recruitment with the “promises” of citizenships. The U.S. citizenships should not become the exchange tools for the government to lure new immigrants who are desperately need documented in this country. No Killing for Citizenships as part of the growing national counter-recruitment campaigns and immigrant-based anti-war movements.

For more information, please send e-mail to National Immigrant Solidarity Network
E-mail: info@ImmigrantSolidarity.org   Tel: (213)403-0131
1. NY: ICE RAIDS LONG ISLAND HOME
On Oct. 28, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents raided a house in Farmingville, Long Island, and arrested 15 Latino immigrants there. Mark Thorne, a spokesperson for the ICE office in Manhattan, called the raid a "routine" operation by ICE's Fugitive Operations Unit and said it was targeting the house's owner, an Ecuadorian immigrant with an outstanding deportation order. But ICE agents arrested 14 other immigrants in the house after determining they were in the country illegally, Thorne said. In the last fiscal year, said Thorne, the Fugitive Operations Unit has detained 1,133 immigrants, including "fugitives" with deportation orders and "collateral," people who happen to be at the raided site and lack documents.

Advocates said the arrested men are Ecuadorian and Mexican day laborers. They were led away in handcuffs and are being detained in Elizabeth, New Jersey, pending deportation hearings. Advocate Irma Solis of the Workplace Project questioned whether local authorities played a role in tipping off ICE officials to the house. Local officials have been cracking down on overcrowded homes occupied by immigrants; since late June, the town has shut down seven houses in Farmingville with a total of at least 100 tenants. [Newsday (NY) 11/2/05]

2. AZ: BORDER PATROL RAIDS DAY LABOR SITE
On Nov. 14, US Border Patrol agents arrested 20 immigrant day laborers at South Ninth Avenue and East 23rd Street in Tucson, Arizona, an area where laborers routinely wait to be picked up for jobs. The Border Patrol used plainclothes agents to arrest the day laborers, said Jose Garza, a spokesperson for the agency's Tucson Sector. Three Tucson police officers backed up the federal agents.

According to day laborer Jesus Alvarado Flores, who was picked up but released after showing his border crossing card, the agents pulled up in an unmarked truck and posed as employers looking to hire laborers. Five men— including Flores—got in the truck; they were then taken to a parking lot and detained by a uniformed agent. Three subsequent trips by the truck brought 15 more men. "They pushed us to the ground and had their guns drawn," said Flores.

Police say that neighbors in the area—reportedly including the Southside Presbyterian Church, which is home to the No More Deaths border activist group—have complained to police about day laborers. To ease tensions in the community, the church has been working with organizers from Phoenix to open a day labor hiring center on its property. The opening of that center was originally set for October, but has been rescheduled for January.

Tucson police will not stop and interview someone based only on a suspicion that the person is here illegally, said Sgt. Mark Robinson. But police received several calls last month about the day laborers and vagrants, said Capt. Tom McNally. Police then called the Border Patrol, according to McNally, because the people who complained, including church officials, told them the problems were caused by illegal border crossers. "It always seems that for political reasons, we always back away from that. In this particular instance, we had to do something," McNally said. [Arizona Daily Star 11/19/05]

3. NEW ORLEANS: ANOTHER BASE RAID
On Oct. 28, ICE agents detained six undocumented workers performing contract work at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base-New Orleans in Belle Chasse, Louisiana. The raid was carried out with the participation of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the US Border Patrol, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and the Navy base police, after ICE agents screened the identification of more than 450 contractors and sub contractors doing work at the base. ICE says the Naval Air Station previously conducted its own investigation and formally barred more than a dozen workers from the facility, then later requested assistance to further investigate contract workers. On Oct. 20, according to an ICE press release, "ICE agents and base security intercepted 10 illegal aliens attempting to enter the Navy facility"; the workers were apparently not arrested, although there were some unconfirmed reports of arrests at the site on Oct. 19 and/or 20. An ICE investigation into the hiring practices of companies performing contract work at the Belle Chasse facility is ongoing. [ICE News Release 10/28/05]

According to ICE, three of the six workers arrested at the base on Oct. 28 were doing work for the Texas-based BMS Catastrophe Inc. But on Oct. 28, BMS spokesperson Mark Johnson disputed that. "Out of 360 workers whose IDs were checked, three were pulled aside for additional questioning. All three were released. None of them were arrested for improper documentation or for being an illegal alien," said Johnson.

Another company operating at Belle Chasse, the Halliburton Co. subcontractor BE&K Inc., said during the week of Oct. 24 that ICE investigators had turned up two unauthorized workers on the company's payroll. A BE&K spokesperson said the two had supplied phony paperwork. [Washington Post 10/29/05]
Great news! On Friday, November 18th, a bipartisan group of Senators officially introduced S. 2075, the DREAM Act of 2005, giving new life to legislation that has been in a holding pattern since the beginning of the year.

The sponsors of the DREAM Act of 2005 are Richard Durbin (D-IL), Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Richard Lugar (R-IN).

The other original cosponsors are Norm Coleman (R-MN), Larry Craig (R-ID), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Mike DeWine (R-OH), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), John McCain (R-AZ), and Barack Obama (D-IL).

It will become law if passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President before the end of 2006.

These Senators will now be targeted for their courage by the anti-immigrant lobby and their vocal supporters. It is essential to balance the abuse with expressions of appreciation from those who care about the great young people who the DREAM Act will help.

Please act now to thank the DREAM Act sponsors. Clicking here will allow you to send a message of thanks to Senators Hagel and Durbin. The message will also go to your own cosponsoring Senator(s) if you live in one of their states. If the above link did not come through, you can cut and paste this address:

http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/NILC/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=1551&t=DREAMblank.dwt

Important: Please forward this message to anyone you know in any of the states the cosponsoring Senators represent to make sure they hear from their constituents.

Background

If enacted, the DREAM Act would transform the lives of persons who were brought to the U.S. years ago as undocumented children and who have stayed in school and out of trouble since their arrival. Currently these individuals have no pathway to legalize their immigration status and get on with their lives. The DREAM Act would correct this flaw by providing that upon high school graduation, these individuals who have grown up in the United States would be able to apply for six years of 'conditional' legal immigration status which would be made permanent if they continue on to college or to serve in the military.

Among those helped would be Marie Gonzalez who grew up in Jefferson City, Missouri. A Latina Magazine Mujer of the year, she became a symbol for others like her when she was able to stave off deportation earlier this year with the help of thousands of supporters. Now she is quietly attending college, but her reprieve only lasts until July of 2006, at which time she could again face deportation if the DREAM Act is not enacted.

The features of the DREAM Act of 2005 are nearly identical to the version that passed the Senate Judiciary Committee last year by a 16-3 vote. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), formerly the Chair of that Committee, was then the sponsor of the DREAM Act. He has assured constituents that his failure to introduce it again this year does not mean that he is any less supportive than he was in the past.

Introduction of the DREAM Act comes at a time when the broader immigration debate is becoming more and more politicized and contentious. DREAM Act supporters argue that it deserves to considered on its own merits, regardless of one's position on other immigration issues. It will have a far bigger impact on education, fairness to children, and American competitiveness than on immigration to this country.

Supporters argue that young people facing high school graduation and major decisions about college or work should not be asked to wait until Congress resolves all of the other vexing immigration issues. Rather, Congress should act now and take these young people off of the field of battle of the immigration wars.

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

ISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:
http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org

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