



PRESS STATEMENT

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State of Union Fails to Acknowledge Reality

Boston, MA – Last night, President Bush’s State of the Union Address failed to tackle the political flashpoint of our nation: immigration reform.

Speaking in broad terms, the President noted the need for stronger enforcement and the implementation of guest worker programs – all while standing against amnesty. Hardly a visionary agenda that serves the working families of America.

Furthermore, given the President’s support of recent legislation that moved through the House of Representatives, he may want to reconsider his moratorium on amnesty.

In December of 2005, the White House expressed “strong support” for the *Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act* (H.R. 4437) – the most fiercely anti-immigrant legislation in over 70 years.

A particularly appalling component of this legislation classifies all those who aid undocumented immigrants as criminal smugglers, including family members, churches, employers, schools, hospitals, or any service providers. As criminal smugglers, these individuals – U.S. Citizens helping their neighbors – would be subject to arrest and conviction.

“So, while the immigrant community only seeks a reduction in waiting lists, an opportunity to get in line for citizenship and equal protection under the law, the fact is that all U.S. Citizens will need amnesty if they are to avoid jail time,” said Ali Noorani, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

Noorani continued, “The reality is that we all benefit from the hard work of documented and undocumented immigrants. Under legislation put forward by the House of Representatives, the dollars we pay for food, services or elder care could land us in jail. If our immigration debate continues to move in this direction, we will all need amnesty.”

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MIRA works to advocate for the rights and opportunities of immigrants and refugees. In partnership with its members, MIRA advances this mission through education, training, leadership development, organizing, policy analysis and advocacy.