



## BAY AREA IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COALITION

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# Press Release

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## **STATE OF THE UNION MUST ADDRESS IMMIGRATION REFORM**

### **BAY AREA IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COALITION CALLS ON PRESIDENT BUSH TO STOP ATTACK ON IMMIGRANTS AND ADVANCE TRUE IMMIGRATION REFORM**

San Francisco, CA. Will President Bush unite or continue dividing us with immigration reform proposals that promise to make it legal to discriminate against immigrant communities? The Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition (BAIRC) anticipates that President Bush will articulate the same unworkable immigration ideas during tonight's State of the Union Address as those he previously proposed. President Bush's position on what constitutes immigration reform is fundamentally short-sighted, makes our communities vulnerable to abuse, and fails to fix what the overwhelming majority of Americans acknowledge is a broken immigration system.

Further, BAIRC condemns the President's support for H.R. 4437, the anti-immigrant bill passed on December 16, 2005 in the U.S. House of Representatives. H.R. 4437 – a punitive, misguided, enforcement-only bill – threatens to erode judicial review, expand the definition of an aggravated felony, criminalize U.S. citizens and legal residents who have routine contact with undocumented immigrants, and increase the potential for employer discrimination and abuse of workers.

"Bush's support of this bill illustrates how far off the mark the Administration is with respect to true immigration reform," stated Anita Sinha of the International Institute of the East Bay.

Under the guise of immigration reform, Bush has also presented a guest worker proposal to recruit foreign workers, which provides them with no labor protections or hope of earning permanent legal status in the United States. Bush's proposals do nothing to integrate immigrants into U.S. society or protect civil and human rights; he simply recycles the disastrous Bracero Program of the 1940s, a guest worker initiative that recruited more than 4 million Mexican citizens to take temporary work in agriculture and other industries in the United States. The Bracero Program produced a system of legalized slavery characterized by unpaid wages, poor housing, and the physical toll of "stoop labor".

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Sheila Chung, Director of BAIRC, explained, "We need a solution to our broken immigration system that reunites families, protects workers, promotes citizenship, and recognizes immigrants for their many contributions."

BAIRC urges the President to cease supporting and offering approaches that treat undocumented immigrants as criminal, disposable and deportable. We continue to wait for the Administration to work toward true immigration reform. The solution is not more border militarization, detention and deportations. The solution is an honest reckoning with the root causes of unauthorized immigration, and building a fair and orderly way for families to be reunited and needed laborers to work in the U.S. This means creating more options for legal migration, family reunification, and access to services, permanent residency and citizenship.

Guadalupe Siordia-Ortiz of Comité de Padres Unidos (Committee of United Parents) added, "Above all, we expect reform to be comprehensive and to promote the integration of immigrant communities."

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