

P R E S S S T A T E M E N T

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President Bush Stuck on Short-sighted and Unrealistic Immigration Reform Proposal

[Los Angeles, CA] Last night, the American public including the Korean American community watched President Bush's State of the Union address in anticipation of a long overdue proposal to effectively reform the nation's failed immigration system. Unfortunately, President Bush offered no new insights or a serious plan that will uphold deeply held American values and strengthen our families, our communities, and our economy.

In his address, President Bush reiterated his stand for "...stronger immigration enforcement and border protection. And we must have a rational, humane guest worker program that rejects amnesty ... allows temporary jobs for people who seek them legally ... and reduces smuggling and crime at the border."

"Past efforts have shown us that wasting resources on more costly, beefed-up enforcement measures will not reduce the flow of migration to the United States. Moreover, a guest worker program that does not guarantee protection of worker rights and provides a path to legal permanent residency is unacceptable," said Eun Sook Lee, executive director of the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC). Ms. Lee continued "Finally, President Bush cannot simply brush aside the presence of 11 million undocumented immigrants including 1.6 million children who have lived, worked hard, and paid taxes for a decade or more by stating 'no amnesty.' What is desperately needed today is the President to exercise bold and intelligent leadership to forge bipartisan support to move forward workable and comprehensive solutions."

"While President Bush has spoken eloquently about America as a compassionate nation and the need to treat people with respect and dignity, his record to date fails to show compassion for the millions of hard-working, tax-paying immigrants who have made significant contributions to our nation," said Kent Chaegu Lee, executive director of Korean American Resource and Cultural Center. Mr. Lee continued, "He has turned his back on immigrants and caved into the demands of the few anti-immigrant extremists in Congress by announcing his strong support for the most anti-immigrant bill in 80 years – the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4437). H.R.4437 will terrorize all our communities by criminalizing millions here without status and punishing the pastors, doctors and social workers who perform everyday good deeds to help them."

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“In his address, he stated that educational opportunities are essential to help our youth become future leaders. Yet, he has remained silent on the DREAM Act, a bill that will open the doors to higher education for all youth regardless of immigration status,” said Yu Soung Mun, executive director of YKASEC – Empowering the Korean American Community in New York. “Instead of supporting such legislation already on the table, his plan will drive millions workers further into an underground economy and tear more families apart.” continued Mr. Mun.

“With one out of five Korean American living in the U.S. without status and 77,000 Koreans caught in the family immigration backlogs, immigration reform is a crucial issue for our community,” said Dae Joong Yoon, executive director of Korean Resource Center in Los Angeles. “Hundreds of Korean Americans along with immigrant communities across the country have rallied together to launched unprecedented activity to voice our opposition to H.R.4437. As the immigration reform debate heats up in D.C., our community will continue to vigilantly monitor the actions of our elected officials and the President and hold them more accountable,” concluded Mr. Yoon.

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