



PRESS RELEASE

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State of Union Fails to Address Broken Immigration System Nebraskans Hold Public Forum to Call for Action

Omaha, NE—On Tuesday night, President Bush’s State of the Union Address failed to address the realities of our broken immigration system. Tonight, citizens will hold a large public forum to demand real solutions to a system that has for too long harmed Nebraska communities, exploited immigrants, separated families, and led to convoluted local policies due to federal inaction.

Once again, the President’s actions have spoken more loudly than his words. In his State of the Union Address, he highlighted the critical contributions of immigrants in the United States today when he said that “the economy could not function without them.” Yet his actions have tended to support the extreme, hard-line agenda and enforcement-only measures favored by certain elements in Congress. This was most recently made evident in December when 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.

The Omaha public forum, “Opportunity Is Knocking: Will Congress Act?” will take place at the Creighton University Skutt Student Center Ballroom (2500 California Plaza) on Thursday, February 2, 2006, and will focus on Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation currently before Congress. The event will begin at 6:30pm with a welcome by Fr. Andy Alexander, Vice-President for University Ministry at Creighton, followed by a keynote address by Jill Gershutz, Legislative Associate of the Jesuit Conference of America. Before the event there will be a potluck rice-and-beans dinner at 5:30pm in lower St. John’s Church (across from the Skutt Center) and a candlelight procession from the church to the Skutt Center at 6:20pm.

“It is critical that our elected officials hear this united message from the community about positive comprehensive immigration reform,” said Maria Teresa Gaston, Director of the Creighton Center for Service and Justice.

“Justice can only be measured by the dignity afforded every person by the safeguards we as a society place on that dignity. The conscience of America – a nation built by dispersed peoples from around the world seeking a second chance – calls for comprehensive immigration reform now,” said Jill Gershutz.

“Enforcement-only approaches to immigration and border issues have lead only to more chaos, more illegality, and less control,” said Milo Mumgaard, Executive Director of Nebraska Appleseed. “A majority of Nebraskans want comprehensive reform that acknowledges the contributions immigrants make to our communities and that treats them fairly. Each day, we are losing out on opportunities for community growth and revitalization in Nebraska, but our country’s broken immigration system holds us back.”

The event is sponsored by Creighton University as part of the Catholic Church’s Justice for Immigrants campaign (www.justiceforimmigrants.org) and Nebraska Appleseed. An expected turn-out of 200-300 people will carry on follow-up actions as Congress considers these bills.

Great Photo Opportunity!

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