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**National Capital Immigration Coalition Urges Legislators to Continue Work on Immigration Proposals to Adequately Protect Civil and Worker Rights**

The National Capital Immigration Coalition (NCIC), the immigration coalition representing the diverse immigrant communities of DC, Maryland, and Virginia, voices strong concerns about legislation that was voted out of the U.S. Senate yesterday. According to regional leaders, S. 2611 will divide families and fails to adequately protect American traditions in the realms of civil and worker rights.

"Not only does this compromise violate our basic American principles of fair and equal treatment, it would be completely unworkable," said Jaime Contreras, President of the NCIC. "Immigrants with less than five years of residency would never choose to participate in a program that provides no guarantees and thus would be driven even further underground and hyper-exploited."

The legislation voted out of the Senate includes provisions that would establish a national language, requires all employers to participate in a database without provided adequate routes to hire documented immigrants, places new limitations on due process by putting unfettered discretion to deny relief in the hands of low level officials, increases the absolute bars to immigration relief, and decreases available humanitarian relief including in cases of immigrants fleeing political and religious persecution. The legislation would also fail to legalize not only the many millions of immigrants that have resided in the United States for less than 2 years, it provides very limited relief to immigrants who have resided here for between 2 and 5 years, and denies relief to immigrants with long periods of residence in the United States for minor crimes such as the utilization of a false social security number. The bill will enter a conference committee negotiation with H.R. 4437, legislation that has been uniformly condemned by community, religious, labor, and business organizations for provisions that, among others, declares all undocumented men, women, and children felons as well as the clergy and charity workers that provide them with aid.

NCIC organizations continue to hope that further improvements can be made in conference.

"Denying relief to many millions of undocumented families is simply unworkable," said Jessica Alvarez, a steering committee member of the NCIC. "We urge our representatives to work hard to improve the legislation so that this broken system can truly be repaired," said Ms. Alvarez.

Across the next several weeks, the NCIC will launch an intense education campaign to provide information to immigrant communities across the region on the provisions of the warring House and Senate bills and to recruit volunteers for activities including citizenship drives and voter registration events. Coalition members have coined this campaign "Democracy Summer" - an initiative to translate the street-level energy around immigration into power at the voting booth.