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Contact:
Alondra Espejel
(612) 310 – 2186
freedomnetwork@gmail.com

PRESS RELEASE

Minnesotans Respond to US Senate's Move on Immigration Bill

ST. PAUL (May 25, 2006) – Today the U.S. Senate voted to pass Senate file 2611, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill. Although this bill brings the American people one step closer to acknowledging America's history as a country built largely by immigrants, comprehensive immigration reform has a long way to go.

Mariano Espinoza, Co-Director of the Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network, has spent the past months organizing and educating Minnesota immigrant communities about the nation's immigration debate. "The Senate bill represents a much more realistic approach to fixing the nation's broken immigration system than what the House presented. Yet there are some key areas for improvement for the Senate, such as moving away from the three-tier legalization program and adopting a simpler and less expensive method of providing a path to legalization for the hard-working immigrant families we know," Espinoza explained.

Across the country, millions of immigrants and their allies mobilized this year to protest the House's passage of HR 4437 – a bill that attempts to make felons out of immigrants – and to advocate for an immigration reform that would provide a path to legalization for the estimated 12 million undocumented workers living in the U.S. In Minnesota, thousands and thousands of people also joined this movement, calling for an immigration reform that would also reunify families who are unfairly separated by the outdated immigration system and one that would embrace the college-bound dreams of hundreds of Minnesota students.

As the immigration talks continue to unfold and as a Senate-House conference committee is called to further solidify an immigration bill, Jennifer Godinez – Board Member of the Minnesota Immigrant Freedom Network – encourages Minnesota Senators and the U.S. Congress to keep the values of those millions of Americans who mobilized in mind in order to propose a truly comprehensive immigration bill. "The people have spoken in support of a sober and workable immigration bill that deals with today's realities of the nation's economic demand for immigrant hands and cultural currency. The public does not support punitive measures for immigrants, nor the tiresome enforcement only policies passed by the House. Immigrants and their allies – Minnesotans that is – are willing and ready to take that opinion to the ballot box come November," Ms. Godinez expressed.

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