

AALDEF Statement Opposing Hagel-Martinez Bill

May 24, 2006—The convoluted debate in the Senate over “comprehensive immigration reform” has made one thing abundantly clear: we must oppose passage of the Hagel-Martinez bill (S. 2611).

The Hagel-Martinez bill is neither reform nor comprehensive policy for immigration. As we suspected, the political climate of the debate has converted this immigration bill into a Trojan horse into which lawmakers have crammed anti-immigrant and undemocratic policies. Instead of opportunities of legalization for all with full workers’ rights and protections, S. 2611 in its basic form proposes to divide our communities by dividing the undocumented into three groups based on how long they have been in the U.S., which would likely bar more than half the undocumented population from adjusting their status from within the U.S. It also vastly increases detention and deportation practices and further militarizes the border.

None of the above proposals will become law as a result of this compromised debate if we stop the passage of Hagel-Martinez. We know that if the Senate were to pass Hagel-Martinez, Congress must reconcile it with the House of Representatives’ enforcement-only H.R. 4437 in order for it to become law. In effect, pushing a flawed bill through the Senate would result in the dilution of any meaningful protections for immigrants remaining in the Senate bill, and leave our immigration system even worse off than it was in 1986, when Congress last enacted large-scale immigration reform.

The Senate has also passed an unnecessary amendment to S. 2611 that declared English as our “national language” and that could undercut immigrants’ access to government services and communication in multiple languages.

Instead, our communities have proposed ten principles for comprehensive immigration reform. Broadly, any legislation lawmakers consider must honor all of the following:

1. Adjustment to legal status for undocumented immigrants.
2. Clearing of the immigration backlog.
3. Expansion of legal immigration opportunities to account for both family-based immigration and the needs of our economy.
4. Provisions that keep families together.
5. Stronger protections for workers—including repeal of employer sanctions, no new guestworker programs, and path to citizenship for future workers.
6. Ending of all detention for mere civil immigration violations and repeal of mandatory deportation.
7. Stronger civil rights standards for enforcement efforts, including ending of racial and ethnic profiling and selective targeting of communities.
8. Full due process rights and judicial review for individuals in removal proceedings.
9. No state and local enforcement of immigration laws.
10. Reasonable, just, and humane enforcement and border policies.

If any law or policy does not meet the above principles that we have set as a starting point, we must voice our opposition and demand nothing less than "comprehensive" immigration reform.

AALDEF urges communities to call their Senator immediately at (202) 224-3121 to oppose passage of Hagel-Martinez.