

## Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

36 S. Wabash, suite 1425 · Chicago, IL 60603 · 312.332.7360 voice · 312.332.7044 fax · www.icirr.org



### SENATE IMMIGRATION BILL STEPS FORWARD BUT FALLS SHORT

*The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights urges Hastert to show leadership*

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) is pleased that the Senate has forged ahead with a bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform bill. We urge House Speaker Dennis Hastert and the House Republicans to abandon their narrow, partisan, and punitive approach and to reach out to the Democrats to develop real solutions to fix our broken immigration system.

With this bill (S 2611), the Senate has fundamentally recognized that our nation needs the hard work that immigrants perform; that mass deportations are both impossible and un-American; and that the only solution to our broken immigration laws is to reduce immigration backlogs, reunite families, and offer a path for undocumented immigrants to earn legal status and eventually become citizens.

As currently written, however, the Senate bill contains many unworkable and even counterproductive provisions:

- Creating three categories of the undocumented based on length of stay would leave millions of immigrants out of the process, subjecting them to harsh enforcement procedures that would drive them further underground and beginning the problem all over again, and would encourage massive document fraud.
- The 370 miles of border fence, costing \$1 million a mile, would be an expensive and offensive symbol, one that would be particularly ineffective when 40- 45% of the undocumented in the U.S. arrive here legally with visas.
- Federalizing local police departments to enforce immigration laws would guarantee that immigrants will not report crimes or serve as witnesses.
- Eliminating judicial discretion and humanitarian exceptions to deportation cases would guarantee the brutal separation of families in the future.

The Senate bill now goes to a Conference Committee to be reconciled with the House bill, HR 4437. The bill could become substantially better--or substantially worse. As the Senate debate indicates, no workable reform can pass without a majority of Democratic support. We urge

**-MORE-**

Speaker Hastert and the House Republicans to reach out to Democrats to craft a workable solution, and to ensure that the Conference Committee improves this bill. If the unworkable portions of the legislation are not fixed, then we will work to defeat it.

ICIRR will meet with our members to debate what stance we should take on this bill and assess which parts of this proposal are useful and which are unworkable. While we recognize that our allies may take different stances regarding this complex bill, we all stand united against criminalizing immigrants and in favor of comprehensive, humane, and workable immigration reform that offers a path to legal status, reunites families, and protects all workers.

As the marches of this spring have shown, our democracy responds to organized people. In the last year and a half, ICIRR has assisted 14,000 immigrants to become US citizens and registered 33,000 immigrant voters. This summer, to move Congress to improve the immigration bill in conference, ICIRR will launch our We Are America Immigrant Democracy Summer to move an additional 10,000 immigrants to become US citizens, and register an additional 15,000 immigrants who are now citizens to vote and to turn out 60,000 immigrant voters out to the polls. We invite our allies to visit our website, [www.icirr.org](http://www.icirr.org), and to join in this campaign.