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For Immediate Release
March 22, 2007

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N E W S R E L E A S E

IMMIGRANT GROUPS WELCOME NEW IMMIGRATION REFORM BILL INTRODUCED TODAY IN CONGRESS

New York Groups Announce New Statewide Campaign on Immigration Reform

New York City. Leaders from New York's immigrant, religious, labor, and business communities came together today to welcome the introduction of new immigration reform legislation by Representatives Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and to launch a major statewide campaign to broaden support for fair and workable immigration reform.

Although the bill's details have to be examined, it appears the Gutierrez-Flake bill, known as the STRIVE Act (Security Through Regularized Immigration and Vibrant Economy), includes the basic principles and elements needed to fix our broken immigration system. These principles include legalization and a path to earned citizenship, strong rights for immigrant and American workers alike, family reunification, due process rights, fair and workable enforcement, increased visas for legal immigration, and help for newcomers to settle and integrate into American society.

"The bipartisan bill in the House is huge progress from last year's absurd anti-immigrant bill that sought to make criminal felons out of millions of undocumented immigrants and anyone who helps them," said Chung-Wha Hong, executive director of The New York Immigration Coalition. "The demand for reform is coming from all quarters – immigrant families want a chance to fully contribute to this country, responsible businesses want a legal workforce, American workers want a level playing field, and the public wants a solution once and for all. Let's all get to work!"

The House bill comes at a time when immigrant groups in New York are launching an ambitious statewide campaign for immigration reform. "Our campaign will ramp up the pressure on New York's senators and representatives in Congress and make tough demands for their active leadership on comprehensive immigration reform," said Grace Heymann, executive director of the Westchester Hispanic Coalition and incoming board chair of the NYIC. "New York is a leading immigrant state in the country, and we should exert major influence in guaranteeing a strong reform bill coming out of Congress," said Heymann.

"The cruel raids and deportations of immigrant families across the country show the urgent need to reform our immigration system," said Father John Duffell of the Church of the Ascension in New York City. "As we all saw in Massachusetts, our immoral immigration policies are inflicting needless suffering on mothers, fathers, and children. We can no longer stand for these avoidable human tragedies."

"Our broken immigration system fuels an underground economy that undermines standards for all working people. Everyone who works hard in America deserves a job that supports a family, affordable health care, and a secure retirement – and we see comprehensive immigration reform as a way of achieving this goal," said Héctor Figueroa, Local 32BJ SEIU secretary treasurer. "Introduction of the STRIVE Act is a step toward passing a bipartisan

comprehensive immigration reform bill that will fix our immigration system, making it more humane while addressing border security, economic security, global competitiveness, and reestablishing the rule of law.”

“Starting in Long Island, the tide is turning on immigration reform. Just as the Sensenbrenner/King bill was thoroughly discredited in Congress, residents of Suffolk County really came together to defeat the anti-immigrant loitering bill,” said Luis Valenzuela, executive director of the Long Island Immigrant Alliance. Two days ago, Suffolk legislators defeated a bill that targeted day laborers in a 10 to 6 vote, signaling an important political move away from County Executive Steve Levy’s repeated attempts to enact local anti-immigrant measures. “We will build on this momentum to call on all local elected officials throughout the state to do their part to support immigration reform.”

“It is time that we pass comprehensive immigration reform that balances our nation’s security needs with a realistic and humane solution for the estimated 12 million undocumented people already living in the United States,” said Representative Joseph Crowley, a deputy majority whip who represents the most diverse Congressional district in the nation. “I am proud to support the bipartisan STRIVE Act because I support earned citizenship for those who work hard and have become an integral part of our communities nationwide. We should seize this window of opportunity to move forward in fixing our broken immigration system by approving this vital legislation, which will streamline the naturalization process for millions.”

The New York State Campaign for Comprehensive Immigration Reform is part of key national reform efforts such as the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, and the Liberty and Justice for All campaign. The New York Immigration Coalition is an umbrella policy advocacy organization with more than 200 members in New York State that fights for justice and opportunity for immigrant New Yorkers.

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