

March 6, 2006

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## **Twenty Thousand to Rally Tomorrow At Capitol At Height of Immigration Debate, Immigrants Demand Respect from U.S. Senate**

Washington, DC – “Stop H.R. 4437! End the criminalization of immigrants! Create a path for citizenship!” These are the calls of the broad-based group of faith, labor, business and community leaders that will come together under the banner of the National Capital Immigration Coalition tomorrow, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 4 PM for a rally on Capitol Hill.

Twenty thousand are expected to converge on the West Lawn of the Capitol where speakers including Senators, representatives of international labor unions and business and community leaders will speak out to **Stop H.R. 4437** – the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act - and call for a real comprehensive immigration reform.

“At one of our lowest points in history, Senators will vote to determine whether 11 million undocumented people in this country, including children, should be defined as felons,” said Gustavo Torres, Executive Director of CASA of Maryland. “Tomorrow the U.S. Congress will hear loudly the voices of those people they seek to criminalize,” said Mr. Torres.

Pending proposals in Congress include initiatives to declare not only immigrants themselves but also the caregivers who help immigrants criminals. These provisions have resulted in widespread contempt particularly among faith-based providers.

“People of all faiths must come together to reclaim the right that we have as children of God, documented or not, to live with dignity,” said Simón Bautista, the Latino Missioner for the Episcopal Dioceses of Washington. “It is a moral obligation – and certainly not a crime - to help all people in need regardless of their immigration status.”

None of the pending proposals includes a solution for the many undocumented people who have lived years in the United States. The best proposal, that recently introduced in the Senate Judiciary Committee by Senator Arlen Specter, contemplates a permanent peonage class for immigrants – a renewable guestworker status that ties workers to potentially abusive employers. Many in the business community call the pending bills shortsighted.

“I came to this country so that I could prosper but also to contribute to the country as a whole,” said Alberto Ferrufino, owner of Don Juan’s Restaurant in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, DC and an immigrant from El Salvador. “I worked 20 hours a day cooking and cleaning for little pay at jobs many Americans do not want to do. Now, as one of the 20,000 Latino business owners in Washington, DC I continue to help the economy. We need legislation that creates a path to legalization for hardworking immigrants and protects the economic growth of the country by providing a legal and organized process to bring future workers to the United States; not legislation that criminalizes people who contribute to this society and economy.”

Tuesday’s actions will feature an interfaith service including Catholic, Jewish, Quaker, Anglican, Methodist and Muslim leaders. Additionally, children, wearing tee-shirts stating “I’m Not a Criminal” will take to the stage to plead for comprehensive immigration reform. Speakers will include Congressmen, labor, business, and faith leaders.

## **Schedule of Events - Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>**

**1:30 PM Press Conference, United Methodist Building, 100 Maryland Ave. NE, Conference Room #3.** Social service providers, doctors, nurses, and educators will speak out against H.R. 4437 detailing the tremendous negative impact the bill would have on professionals who serve immigrants as nurses, teachers, lawyers, and counselors. They will then dramatize how this bill criminalizes the professionals who serve the immigrant community by putting on plastic handcuffs for a **photo opportunity**. Speakers include: Sharon Baskerville, Executive Director of the DC Primary Care Association, Juan Romagoza, Director of La Clinica del Pueblo, Ikeita Cantú-Hinojosa, Legislative Affairs, National Association of Social Workers, and dozens more.

**4:00 PM Rally Opposing HR 4437, U.S. Capitol West Lawn:** A large and vibrant rally will begin with drumming and chanting as people arrive on the West Capitol Lawn.

**4:30 PM Interfaith Service, U.S. Capitol West Lawn:** Faith leaders representing Jewish, Catholic, Quaker, Anglican, Methodist, Muslim, Christian, and other faiths and denominations will lead a service to call for just and comprehensive immigration reform.

**5:00 PM National and local elected officials as well as religious, community and business leaders will address the rally.** Speakers will include Kweisi Mfume, former President of the NAACP, Cecilia Muñoz, Vice President, National Council of La Raza, local elected officials including Walter Tejada, Tom Perez, and Will Campos, the American Friends Service Committee and numerous religious, community and business leaders. The rally will close with 80 children taking the stage wearing t-shirts reading "I Am Not a Criminal," accompanied with drumming, chanting and singing.

### **The following people are available for interview:**

*The following people are available for interview to discuss the planning and logistics of the March 7<sup>th</sup> event as well as the potential negative impacts of H.R. 4437 and their call for comprehensive immigration reform.*

**Ricardo Juarez: MEXICANOS SIN FRONTERAS** ( 571) 330-8529, [ricardo@mexicanossinfronteras.org](mailto:ricardo@mexicanossinfronteras.org). Ricardo is a Immigrant worker, a community organizer and the coordinator of Mexicans Without Borders the regional community organization Located in the tri-state area of Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC, and Delaware . he can speak abuth the impact of this Law on the workers and mexican immigrants.

**Doris DePaz, CASA Maryland, Inc,** 240-305-9032, Ms. Paz is a community organizer and can speak on the impact this bill would have on domestic workers, as well as the people who employ domestic workers. (Spanish)

**Flavia Jimenez, National Council of La Raza,** 202-459-1660, can give a national perspective on the House Bill as well as updates and further information related to this bill in the Senate. (English or Spanish)

**Chuks Eleonu, African-PAC,** 202.714.5921, Mr. Eleonu is available to speak to the press concerning the benefits and added values immigrants bring as strong contributing partners in the pursuit of American ideals; and how Anti-immigrant Legislation hurts small businesses, academic institutions, and the long-term vibrancy of America's demographic profile. (English)

**Reverend Simón Bautista, Latino Missioner for The Episcopal Diocese of Washington,** 202-294-4256, Reverend Bautista can speak to the reasons that the faith community opposes the Border and Immigration Enforcement Act and is calling for comprehensive and just immigration reform. (English or Spanish)

**Gustavo Torres, Executive Director, CASA Maryland, Inc,** 301-996-0442. Mr. Torres can speak on impact the legislation will have on area immigrants and the professionals who serve them as well as the extent to which these proposals could affect the Latino vote in 2006. (English or Spanish)

**Jon Liss, Tenants and Workers United,** Alexandria, Virginia, 703-402-8021. Mr. Liss is available to speak to the potential impact of this legislation on workers in Virginia as well as the alternative proposals that his organization supports. (English or Spanish)

**Eugenio Arene, Council of Latino Agencies**, Washington, DC, 202-271-0727. Mr. Arene can speak to the effect this bill will have on community organizations in Washington and the population they serve. (English or Spanish)

**Saul Solorzano, CARECEN – Central American Resource Center of Washington**, Washington, DC, 202-328-9801, Mr Solorzano can speak on how this legislation will affect this community as well as the proposals which CARECEN supports. (English or Spanish)

**Jaime Contreras, National Capital Immigrant Coalition**, 301-775-0202, Mr. Contreras is available to speak of the growing advance of immigrant organizing regionally and the relationship between labor and immigrant rights. (English or Spanish)

**Abdul Kamus, United HERE and African Resource Center**, 202-413-1332, Mr. Kamus is a leader within the Ethiopian and African communities in Washington, DC and can also speak from the perspective of local labor unions. (English)

**Reverend Christy Swanson, CASA of Maryland, Coordinator of the Interfaith Service**, 240-354-5484. Please contact her with questions concerning the interfaith service. (English or Spanish)

**Athena Viscusi, Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker, Clinical Director, Neighbors Consejo**, Available to speak on the impact on social workers and social services organizations, on vulnerable populations such as battered women, and children and the impact of not treating mentally ill and substance abusing immigrants on our whole society. (English or Spanish)

**Alberto Ferruffino, Owner, Don Juan's Restaurant**, Mt Pleasant, Washington, DC, 202-492-4859. Mr. Ferruffino is able to speak personally as an immigrant and small business owner on the negative effects this legislation would have on small business owners, particularly in the DC area. (Spanish, after 1 PM)

**Manuel Hidalgo, Latino Economic Development Corporation**, Washington, DC, 240-462-3343. Mr. Hidalgo can speak to the negative impacts the legislation will have on the small business owners in the DC area that LEDC serves. He can also speak to the comprehensive immigration reform that many in the business community are calling for. (English or Spanish)

## **THE NATIONAL CAPITAL IMMIGRATION COALITION**

Action Langley Park  
African Peoples Action Congress  
African Resource Center  
American Friends Service Committee  
Archdiocese of Washington Office of Justice & Service  
AYUDA  
Catholic Charities Diocese of Arlington  
Carlos Rosario International Career Center & Public Charter School  
CARECEN  
CASA of Maryland  
Center for Community Change  
Council American-Islamic Relation – Maryland & Virginia  
Council of Latino Agencies  
DC Jobs with Justice  
Foundry United Methodist Church  
Hispanic Latino Ministries Baltimore-Washington Conference, United Methodist Church  
Laborers Local 657  
La Clínica del Pueblo  
Latin American Youth Center  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)  
Latino Economic Development Corporation  
Latino Ministries, Episcopal Church of the Asuncion  
Mary's Center  
**Mexicanos Sin Fronteras**  
Migrant and Refugee Cultural Support MIRECS  
Muslim Community Center

National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development  
National Council of La Raza  
National Immigration Law Center  
Neighbors Consejo  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Public Justice Center  
SEIU32BJ Union, District 82  
SEIU 32BJ Union, District 1199  
Somali Family Care Network  
Tahirih Justice Center  
Tenants and Workers United  
UNITE-HERE Local 27  
Salvadorian National Chamber of Commerce  
South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow SAALT  
Spanish Apostolate of Virginia  
Virginia Justice Center