

# DMIBLOG

Politics, Policy, and the American Dream

AMY TAYLOR

## Another Reason Workplace Raids Harm the Middle class

Is there another agenda behind the recent surge in workplace raids? Some commentators argue that in addition to a pre-holiday show of force on the issue of illegal immigration, the raids are part of a **larger conservative agenda** aimed at creating a climate of fear to undermine union organizing efforts.

Union membership is at an all time low at 12.5%, and not because workers are uninterested in joining them. Union members and potential members face real challenges to organizing in the workplace. A recent commentator cites a **"long-standing conservative political objective to eradicate unions"** which has led to 30 % of employers terminating pro-union workers when faced with an organizing drive. Even more employers will threaten to close a worksite or attempt to use bribery and favoritism to convince workers to oppose the unions. Furthermore, the governmental agency charged with addressing unfair labor practices is the supposedly independent National Labor Relations Board, notoriously bureaucratic and run by anti-union presidential appointees. Suffice it to say that it is no coincidence that union membership is down. And as membership levels have gone down, wages have stagnated and employee benefits have been slashed across entire industries.

The reasons for such anti-union fervor are obvious. Union members had wage increases that were **double the rate of non-union members in 2005**. Employers work hard to keep union membership down to save their own costs.

This is where immigrant workers come in. The great organizing power of immigrant communities have often been viewed as fringe movements and placed outside of the progressive agenda. This has been viewed as a **great failure of the progressive movement**. In order for working Americans to protect their livelihood, they must join hands with the new face of workers in the U.S., and that includes immigrant workers.

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Unions are, for the most part, already on board and have been **outspoken supporters of legislation creating a pathway to legalization** for undocumented workers. Union leaders understand the connection between immigration reform and the future of organized labor -- if immigrants did not face daily threats from their employers because of their immigration status, they would be more likely to join the ranks of organized labor fearlessly. And the new alliances are not based merely on the goal of increased membership but also in the understanding that immigrant workers are not the culprits for our economic woes, but rather potential partners in the fight against corporate greed. Although thousands of immigrant workers have been active participants in recent organizing drives, they face many more challenges than your ordinary worker in stepping forward to demand workplace rights. And knowing how difficult it is for U.S. workers to join unions, the intimidation level skyrockets when you add the recent ICE raids to the picture.

Workers of the world beware! If immigrant workers are threatened underground even more than they already are through the use of scare tactics such as workplace raids, it will not only be their families who have less in the bank at the end of the year. The power of organized labor will continue to decline if unions cannot join hands with immigrant workers to fight for a living wage and better working conditions. The key to this dynamic partnership is to bring immigrant workers out of the shadows and onto the playing field.

Posted by Amy Taylor at December 27, 2006 08:35 AM

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Posted by: Harvey McAllister | [December 27, 2006 09:24 AM](#)

Is the point of this story is to show republicans want legal workers and the dems want illegal immigrant labor combined with big corporation and union profits? How does that help the middle class?

Posted by: Harvey McAllister | [December 27, 2006 09:28 AM](#)

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