



MALDEF

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

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December 18, 2006

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The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

Chicago
Regional Office
11 East Adams Street
Suite 700
Chicago, IL 60603
Tel: 312.427.0701
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We are writing to express our strong concern about the recent multi-state immigration enforcement raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials at Swift and Company plants. According to department figures, over 1200 individuals have been taken into ICE custody to local and state jails, prisons and other facilities across the country. There, they will remain, separated from family members, as they wait, perhaps for weeks, for ICE paperwork and deportation proceedings. Of the more than 1200 individuals, only 65, or approximately 5% have criminal charges pending against them. The remainder are to be placed in administrative proceedings.

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Without questioning ICE legal authority to enforce the Immigration and Nationality Act, we question the timing and appropriateness of these enforcement actions. For example, Utah press reports indicate that ICE personnel separated Latinos from non-Latinos for questioning and provided blue wristbands to non-Latino and light-skinned employees who were exempt from questioning. According to the reports, all company employees perceived to be Latinos by ICE personnel, irrespective of their citizenship or immigration status, were subject to questioning. If racial profiling took place to this degree, it would not be the first time that ICE, or its predecessor the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), conducted itself in ways that violate the civil rights of United States citizens, legal immigrants and unauthorized immigrants. We are also concerned that individuals are being detained far from their homes and available legal counsel--including 40 Iowa residents being held 1,000 miles away in Georgia. Therefore, we call upon the Department's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, and, if necessary, the Office of Inspector General, to commence an immediate investigation.

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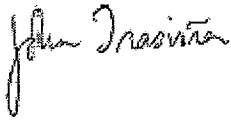
Sacramento
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We urge the Administration to work with Congressional leaders to enact comprehensive immigration reform early in 2007 rather than pursue overbroad and harmful enforcement of an immigration policy that is universally accepted as being broken. These raids, in towns that have unemployment rates as low as 2%, have had a negative impact on families, communities, civil rights and meat packing plant production and no impact on the legislative process or fixing the nation's

broken immigration system. Lacking any other benefit and before more damage is caused, these raids should be terminated and we call upon you to do so immediately.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter now facing communities across the nation.

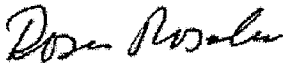
Sincerely,



John Trasviña
President & General Counsel
MALDEF



Jimmie V. Reyna
President
Hispanic National Bar Association



Rosa Rosales
National President
League of United Latin
American Citizens (LULAC)



Arturo Vargas
Executive Director
National Association of Latino Elected and
Appointed Officials (NALEO)

cc: The Honorable Joseph Baca, Chairman, Congressional Hispanic Caucus
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Orrin Hatch, United States Senator
The Honorable Ken Salazar, United States Senator
The Honorable Arlen Specter, Chairman, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, United States Representative
The Honorable John Conyers, Ranking Member, U.S. House Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Chris Cannon, United States Representative
The Honorable Luis Fortuño, Chair, Congressional Hispanic Conference
The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Government Affairs
The Honorable Joseph Lieberman, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and Government Affairs
The Honorable Don Young, Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Homeland
Security
The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee
on Homeland Security
The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Chairman, U.S. House Judiciary Committee
Jennifer Korn, Associate Director, Office of Public Liaison, The White House