

NYIC IMMIGRATION NEWS

An update by the New York Immigration Coalition on issues affecting immigrants and their communities.

Volume VII, Issue #6, May 20, 2004

“Immigrant Votes Making the Difference” in 2004

On May 4th, the NYIC and its partners launched a comprehensive nonpartisan voter campaign, entitled “Immigrant Votes Making the Difference,” at City Hall to mark the six-month countdown to Election Day. The campaign brings together more than a dozen major immigrant groups to conduct intensive voter education and get-out-the-vote activities in the lead-up to the November elections. The campaign is committed to mobilizing a total of 120,000 or more immigrant voters. To join the campaign, contact Suman at ext. 236.

IMMIGRATION

The SOLVE Act: Congress Introduces Sweeping Immigration Reform Legislation

On May 4th, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) introduced sweeping new immigration reform legislation – the *Safe, Orderly, Legal Visas and Enforcement (SOLVE) Act of 2004* (S.2381/H.R.4262). Immigrant groups in more than 30 cities, including New York, held press events in support of the bill, which presents a fair, effective, and comprehensive approach to immigration reform that includes earned legalization, family reunification, and workers’ rights protections.

The bill’s earned adjustment provisions would legalize undocumented immigrants who have been here five or more years as of May 4th and can demonstrate two years of employment and payment of taxes. Spouses and minor children also would be eligible to adjust. Applicants here less than five years would be eligible for transitional status of five years, during which they would be able to work with authorization and travel; after two years of work, they also would be eligible to adjust.

The bill also would begin to address the backlog of family-based visas that forces families to live apart for years. One provision would expand the immediate relative category to include the spouses and minor children of *lawful permanent residents*.

In addition, the bill would establish worker visa programs (H-1D and H-2B) for workers in low-skilled positions. The programs would include a path to permanent residency – employers could immediately petition for a worker upon initial employment, or workers could self-petition after two years’ employment. Other provisions seek to ensure decent wages and workplace conditions for all workers.

Locally, the City Council expressed support for legalization by passing Resolution 42, introduced by

Council Member Martinez, on May 5th. The resolution calls upon Congress “to oppose [President Bush’s] proposed federal temporary guest worker program and to support the passing of comprehensive immigration reform that includes permanent legalization and fair worker protection for immigrants.” As a major immigrant center, New York plays a key role in the national campaign for immigration reform.

In New York, work on the SOLVE Act is being coordinated through monthly meetings of the NYIC’s Legalization Working Group. Currently, the Working Group is circulating an organizational sign-on letter in support of the SOLVE Act. Additionally, the NYIC will be conducting “train-the-trainer” sessions to enhance member groups’ capacity to educate their constituents about SOLVE and other legalization proposals; trainings will be conducted at organizations throughout the city. The NYIC also is compiling case stories about people who would benefit from the SOLVE Act and organizing a Speaker’s Bureau to support groups’ collective media work. If your organization has a good profile of a potential SOLVE Act beneficiary, please email it to jvimo@thenyic.org. For more information (a detailed bill summary is available), call Jackie Vimo at ext. 239.

“New American Freedom Summer” Seeks Young Activists to Continue Legacy of Civil Rights Struggle

Last summer, the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride highlighted immigrant workers’ struggle for justice and helped move the issue of immigration to the forefront of the national agenda. This year, the New American Freedom Summer, modeled after the 1964 voter registration campaign, will continue the struggle for civil rights with a focus on immigrant communities.

The campaign kicks off in late June in Mississippi, site of the original Freedom Summer. Leaders from the original Freedom Summer will train a new generation of activists in voter registration, non-violent resistance, and direct action. Participants then will head to Arizona and Florida, where they will work to build power in immigrant communities that are particularly disenfranchised. In south Florida, they will work with Haitian refugees who have come to the United States fleeing persecution only to be detained, discriminated against, and denied basic civil rights. In Arizona, participants will work with Latino communities that have suffered thousands of deaths at the border and are fighting several active anti-immigrant legislative initiatives.

Participants will make door-to-door contacts with immigrants to encourage them to engage in civic life,

participate in community-based education around immigrant rights, and engage in direct actions to highlight the injustice of our immigration system. The New American Freedom Summer still seeks activists who will volunteer a minimum of 4-6 weeks this summer to be part of this exciting opportunity. For more information, contact Jackie Vimo at ext. 239.

HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Emergency-Room Deportation Bill Defeated

Thanks to everyone who made calls, wrote letters, and helped shape the coverage of Representative Dana Rohrabacher's anti-immigrant bill, the "Undocumented Alien Emergency Medical Assistance Amendments of 2004" (H.R.3722). The measure was defeated in the House on May 18th by a vote of 88-331. All members of the New York Congressional delegation present voted against the measure. The hospital industry also was united in its opposition.

Immigrant advocates nationwide were stunned and disgusted that House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) fast-tracked this radical legislation, which would have put many immigrants and their citizen children in the position of choosing between deportation and death. The bill, proposed by Representative Rohrabacher, a Republican from Orange County, California, would have required hospitals to collect from suspected undocumented patients their immigration status information, addresses, employer information, and biometric identifiers (e.g., fingerprints) and transmit this information to the Department of Homeland Security for deportation purposes. Hospitals that failed to comply would have lost crucial federal funding.

This irresponsible and dangerous legislation would have forced hospitals to become agents of immigration enforcement and diverted precious hospital resources away from patient care. Persons in need of prenatal care or critical medical care would have delayed seeking it, resulting in far-more-costly care being needed down the line, or even death.

This is an ideal time to remind your constituents that all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, have a right to emergency medical care without having their status reported to immigration authorities. To receive a copy of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation's confidentiality policy, email your request to Su Yon at syi@thenyic.org.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Inclusionary Zoning Creates New Opportunities for Affordable Housing

The Bloomberg administration has major plans to develop New York City, encouraging developers to convert low-rise neighborhoods and manufacturing areas into office towers and luxury housing. The Department

of City Planning has started re-zoning dozens of neighborhoods in all five boroughs – Hudson Yards, West Chelsea, downtown Brooklyn, Williamsburg and Greenpoint, Long Island City, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Manhattanville, and Hunts Point, among others. While these plans include a significant amount of new housing, there are no guarantees that any of the new housing created in these neighborhoods will be affordable to people earning less than \$100,000. This massive redevelopment provides the best opportunity in years to build new affordable housing, but action is needed right now to make affordable housing part of the plan.

A citywide coalition has formed to fight for affordable housing by launching the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning. Inclusionary zoning requires developers to include affordable housing when they build market-rate housing, often in exchange for a bonus that allows them to build a larger building. Hundreds of cities have used inclusionary zoning to build thousands of units of affordable housing. Housing advocates aim to achieve a similar result in New York City by (1) building support in the City Council to first pass a resolution calling for inclusionary zoning and then to demand inclusionary zoning in future neighborhood re-zonings, and (2) working closely with community groups in several neighborhoods undergoing re-zoning. To learn more about the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning, email Benjamin at bross@thenyic.org, contact Julie Miles at julmiles@earthlink.net or 212-608-5122, or visit www.izny.org.



ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW TO HELP PROTECT IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

- 1. Urge Senator Schumer and your House Representative to sign onto the SOLVE Act!** Senator Clinton is a co-sponsor, but Senator Schumer is not. Only 5 of New York's 29 House Representatives are co-sponsors (Reps. Crowley, McCarthy, Serrano, Velazquez, and Rangel). Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121. Also, please add your group to the organizational sign-on letter in support of the SOLVE Act. Contact Jackie Vimo at ext. 239 for more information.
- 2. Young activists – work for the New American Freedom Summer campaign!** Don't pass up this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn about activism from leaders of the 1964 Freedom Summer and work with immigrant communities in Arizona and Florida. Call Jackie Vimo at ext. 239.
- 3. Call your House Rep to say thanks for voting against Rep. Rohrabacher's emergency-room deportation bill (H.R.3722).** Ask for his or her continued opposition to anti-immigrant legislation. Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121.

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Thanks to AILA, Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning, National Immigration Forum, and NILC for informational assistance in compiling this update.