

Immigration Policy Center (IPC)

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in the United States.

PRESS RELEASE

June 20, 2008

Leading Mayors Decry Raids Ineffective Deterrent Tactic Leaves Trail of Casualties: Local Economies, Families, Communities

At this weekend's annual meeting in Miami of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the leaders of three prominent West Coast cities—Mayors Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, Ron Dellums of Oakland, and Greg Nickels of Seattle—plan to introduce a resolution denouncing the workplace raids being carried out around the country by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). “Resolution No. 52” emphasizes the damage done to local economies by such raids and calls upon the government to focus its enforcement efforts on businesses that actually exploit workers through violations of wage and safety laws, rather than “responsible employers” who contribute to their communities. As Mayor Villaraigosa told *USA Today*: “At a time when we don’t have the resources to go after criminals, we’re going after legitimate businesses and workers instead. That doesn’t make sense.” ([“West Coast mayors decry immigration raids,” USA Today, June 20, 2008](#))

Raids Rip Apart Families

But immigration raids do more than waste limited law-enforcement resources and needlessly damage local economies. They also destroy families. A report released in October of 2007 by the National Council of La Raza and the Urban Institute, [Paying the Price: The Impact of Immigration Raids on America's Children](#), emphasizes that the proliferation of worksite immigration raids has put the approximately five million children of undocumented immigrants increasingly “at risk of family separation, economic hardship, and psychological trauma.” The report points out that “the forcible separation of children from parents” which occurs as a result of worksite raids violates a founding principle of our nation: “that children’s futures should not be based on their parents’ social status.”

Raids: The Sisyphus Tactic of our Times

Beyond the economic and humanitarian destructiveness of raids, they are not effective deterrents to undocumented immigration. Research led by Wayne Cornelius, Director of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at U.C.-San Diego, has shown that **most intending undocumented migrants are well aware that worksite raids** and other forms of local-level immigration enforcement are taking place in the United States and still come because the very real possibility of arrest and deportation does not outweigh the pull of available jobs. As Dr. Cornelius’ research makes clear, enforcement measures like worksite raids are unlikely to be effective unless they are coupled with comprehensive immigration reform that includes a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants already living in the United States and expanded avenues for legal immigration in the future. ([Controlling Unauthorized Immigration](#))

[From Mexico: The Failure of “Prevention through Deterrence” and the Need for Comprehensive Reform](#), June 10, 2008)

Postville Bears the Scars

The lessons of failed immigration enforcement without effective immigration reform have been learned the hard way by the residents of Postville, Iowa, which experienced the largest workplace immigration raid in U.S. history on May 12, 2008. As the reactions of Postville’s elected officials, community members, and religious leaders reveal, the raid tore the community apart. As Postville Mayor Bob Penrod succinctly told the *Des Moines Register*: “We didn’t need this. This literally blew our town away.” ([Postcards from Postville, Iowa: Town Leaders and Residents Tell the Story of the Largest Immigration Raid in U.S. History](#), June 19, 2008)

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