



IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America

For Immediate Release

Obama Administration in Sync on Immigration Dollars and Sense *Administration Laying the Foundation for Immigration Reform*

May 6, 2009

Washington D.C. - The Obama Administration is clearly in sync on immigration today, announcing initiatives that pave the way for immigration reform. In a Senate oversight hearing this morning, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, testified about her plans to protect our borders and enforce our immigration laws in smarter and more effective ways. Meanwhile, President Obama unveiled a \$27 billion plan for border and transportation security - part of the 2010 budget he plans to present to Congress tomorrow - that will enable the Secretary to do just that.

Secretary Napolitano discussed her plans to use agency resources to round up the most dangerous criminals in this country, as well as work to improve employment-verification systems that are currently being piloted. The President's new budget request supports those plans by enabling Napolitano to hire additional agents and enhance security at air and seaports, expand screening for dangerous criminals in jails, and implement badly needed improvements to the E-Verify system. Secretary Napolitano also notably recognized the human issues at stake in enforcement strategies and signaled her support for the DREAM Act when asked by Senator Richard Durbin to give her thoughts on the legislation.

The President's budget goes beyond smart enforcement strategies to recognize the importance of investing in immigrants. Among the priorities of the 2010 budget is increased funding to reduce exorbitant application fees and improve processing of immigration applications. The budget will also allow for the creation of an immigrant-integration office at U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services and provide grants to community groups that help immigrants prepare for citizenship tests and learn English. Additional funding will create jobs for 28 new immigration judges, an important first step in dealing with the long neglected backlog of pending immigration cases.

"We are heartened to see the Administration's emphasis on smart enforcement that targets the worst offenders and most pressing dangers. This is something that has taken a back seat to previous immigration-enforcement strategies that focused on sound bites and symbolic gestures," said Ben Johnson, Executive Director of the American Immigration Law Foundation. "The President's budget will also make critically needed investments in infrastructure that move us closer to an agency that operates in real time, rather than one that is bogged down in bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies. The budget also includes much-needed resources for integration and citizenship programs, as well as immigration courts, where due process and fundamental principles of fairness must be affirmed."

While these initiatives begin the process of fixing our broken immigration system, they must be conducted in tandem with legislative efforts to further reform the system. Until we squarely address the concerns of the millions of immigrants who have no means to legalize their status, reunite with families, and fully integrate into our country, we will fall short of true progress.

###

For media inquiries contact Wendy Sefsaf, 202-507-7524 or Andrea Nill, 202-507-7520.

THE IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

1331 G STREET • WASHINGTON, DC 20005 • TEL: (202) 507-7500 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

www.immigrationpolicy.org