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For Immediate Release

DHS Announces Changes In Worksite Enforcement Policies *Agency Takes First Step in Realigning Enforcement Priorities*

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Washington, D.C. - *Today the Department of Homeland Security announced policy changes around worksite immigration enforcement. Senior Policy Analyst Michele Waslin of the Immigration Policy Center (IPC) issued the following statement:*

"IPC is encouraged by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision to refocus its worksite enforcement on those employers who are exploiting the broken immigration system. This is a good first step in realigning enforcement priorities. However, DHS's ability to truly focus on abusive employers is limited by the fact that our current immigration system doesn't provide immigrants or legitimate employers the protections and tools they need to comply with the law. Rather than trimming around the edges, real reform must involve an overhaul of the entire system to ensure that enforcement of our immigration laws is effective, fair, and humane.

The newly announced DHS guidelines will focus on criminal prosecutions of employers who knowingly hire unauthorized workers. In 2008, large-scale raids resulted in more than 6,000 arrests, only 135 of whom were employers. Frequently DHS launched raids based on tips that an employer was hiring unauthorized workers rather than being the result of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigations of employers, making it difficult to secure adequate evidence to result in prosecution. The new guidelines emphasize investigating and criminally prosecuting abusive employers thereby honing in on one of the root causes of undocumented immigration. Currently, immigrants, families, and law-abiding employers are caught up in a dysfunctional immigration system which creates incentives to circumvent the law.

DHS also announced that ICE headquarters will play a larger role in defining the objectives and strategies around worksite enforcement, supplanting the old model where local field offices wielded broad discretion and often focused on "low hanging fruit" rather than egregiously abusive employers.

Despite these welcome changes, additional reform will be needed to target employers who violate labor laws, such as wage and hour laws, as well as immigration laws. DHS must send the message that hiring and exploiting unauthorized workers is not acceptable.

Most critically, the Administration and Congress must reform our broken immigration system. Yesterday President Obama renewed his commitment to immigration reform, and today the U.S. Senate will hold a hearing on immigration, increasing the momentum toward reform. We must not let this historic opportunity to bring the nation's legal immigration system into the 21st century slip by."

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