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**SENATE'S "GANG OF 8" REFORM BILL:
ENORMOUS EXPENDITURE FOR WALLS, DRONES, SURVEILLANCE,
AGENTS, NATIONAL ID SYSTEM, GUARANTEES FOR BIG BUSINESS, MASS
FIRINGS, INCREASES IN DEPORTATIONS AND CRIMINALIZATION,
LIMITATIONS ON FAMILY IMMIGRATION, AND VERY LITTLE
LEGALIZATION FOR WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Tucson – After decades of working and suffering attacks on their humanity, an estimated 11 million undocumented workers and their families were optimistic after the results of last year's election, that the Senate's eight-member group, tasked with the drafting of a bill to deal with the regularization of their status, would finally fix the irresponsible immigration system. It has instead opted for an unprecedented expansion of policing and military-style border and interior build-up. The purported "path to citizenship" is a cruel misrepresentation that has brought out both the anti-immigrant voices to cry out that 11 million "should not receive citizenship," and, the immigrant community to believe that a fair process for their legalization will be put in place. Neither is a reality.

The bill makes it clear that only a relatively few will be able to qualify for and receive the six-year temporary worker permit, known as "Registered Provisional Immigrant" (RPI) as the requirements are unreasonable and intended to severely limit those who can proceed in this temporary status, renewable at additional costs for another six years, before even being able to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) status. While deportations continue, this process cannot even begin until the "border security" triggers are met. Essentially, the normal legalization process BEGINS after ten years of RPI status, and ONLY if the person is able to pay substantial fees, fines and other costs related to the process, prove what he or she earned and what taxes you have paid, and pay any back taxes, among other requirements. After three years of LPR status, and the paying of additional fees, fines, and other costs, those individuals can apply for citizenship - in other words, 13 years from date of receiving the RPI status, and even that is after a minimum of a five year process to build more fences and meet ambiguous "proof" that the border is secure. The only groups that are receiving more favorable relief are the DREAM Act youth and those in the Agricultural Program. The text devoted to "citizenship" is the smallest relevant portion of this legislation, and yet, this is called a "Path to Citizenship" bill by media and the politicians alike.

The most significant part of this proposed legislation, however, is the dramatic escalation of a "war zone" environment, particularly along the border regions, which comes at an obscene

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expense to the taxpayers, (an additional \$5.5 billion to the \$18 billion spent last year), and will cause even heavier costs: to the human and civil rights of immigrants, border residents, and entire communities who suffer the consequences of separation of their families and friends, as well as living with the heavy “policing” of our communities, particularly with measures that consolidate the collaboration of all local law enforcement with the BP and ICE; the economic devastation of cities and towns; the environmental destruction of our precious border lands; the prosecution, conviction, and incarceration of hundreds of thousands of migrants for the crime of “unlawful entry,” again, at a tremendous human and financial cost. All this will provide a huge profit for Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which stands to at least triple its annual profit if this bill becomes law, and for other prison/military corporate contractors as well, many of whom already benefit from “no-bid” contracts. The requirement of 100% surveillance along the border, together with the use of the National Guard, the building of more walls, the use of unmanned drones, and other military-type strategies called for in the bill show their intention to make our communities live in a militarized, war-like zone.

A vast majority of the public has historically fought against the creation of a National ID, realizing the critical importance of our civil liberties and rights to privacy are fundamental to our personal sense of freedom. The bill proposed by the Senators mandates employer verification of a worker’s immigration status, through the creation of a national E-Verify system, is a direct road to a National ID. Non-citizens will be required to show their “biometric work authorization card” or their “biometric green card.” Most pernicious is the requirement that states be pushed to include ALL of their state driver’s license information, including photographs, in E-Verify. This merger would create a giant photo database of everyone in the country – citizen and non-citizen alike -- which could potentially be accessed anywhere by internet. The possibilities of uses in other scenarios are numerous and dangerous.

As we tout the importance of family, this bill changes this priority by removing two preference categories from the family-based immigration process, brothers and sisters of U. S. citizens, and married sons and daughters of citizens if over 30 years of age, as well as creating “merit” based visas and repealing the Diversity Visa Program, an important avenue for African and Caribbean immigrants. Importantly, the bill provides no avenue for LBGQT families to reunite. Lastly, the Senators propose an expansion and streamlining of H-1B visas, and creation of a new visa, the W-Visa, for “lower-skilled” worker, assuring private industry of new laborers, while ignoring the very core of the issue of immigration –the reasons for migration and particularly the role US foreign political and economic policies play in those sending countries migration patterns. Without this aspect, the word 'comprehensive' is meaningless when used to describe immigration reform.

The undocumented community has worked, has suffered, and has enriched all of our lives. It is time we as a nation do what is right, “pay our debt” to our immigrant brothers and sisters by passing real reform of our laws that reflect the reality, that respect each other and other nations, that address the root causes of migration, and that finally de-militarize our borders and communities so that we may all live and work together in peace.

Our statement is based on reading several congressional staff summaries provided to media and others. We will continue to analyze the bill to understand more fully all its provisions.

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