



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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More Than 80 House Members Ask for Enforcement of Immigration Laws

Washington, DC – Today more than 80 House Members let the Bush Administration know of their opposition to guestworker programs until current immigration laws are better enforced.

Their views were made known through a letter authored by Congressmen John Hostettler (R-IN), Tom Tancredo (R-CO), and Lamar Smith (R-TX).

In the letter, the large coalition of House Members state that while guestworker and amnesty provisions have a history of being implemented, enforcement provisions have been consistently ignored and underfunded by the government. The Members believe that this has resulted in large increases in illegal immigration, and has decreased faith in the government's ability to secure the nation's borders.

"The American people need to see that the current laws against illegal immigration are being enforced before any guestworker program can be considered," the Members state in the letter.

The letter cites several examples of the government's reluctance to enforce immigration laws, including the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act in which amnesties for farm workers and other illegal aliens were carried out, but employer sanctions and other enforcement provisions were not.

Rep. Smith's 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act is also provided as an example of the federal government's unwillingness to enforce laws against illegal immigration. The Act mandated the implementation of a national exit-entry tracking system for all aliens. However, nine years later, the exit-entry system is still not near completion.

"Today an estimated 12 to 20 million illegal aliens are in the United States. They know that if they successfully enter the country and find a job, they will likely be able to stay for the rest of their lives because the government has shown little interest in enforcing its own laws.

"Employers also know that once they hire an illegal alien, it is unlikely that they will ever be investigated or prosecuted for doing so. Enforcement of the laws against illegal immigration and employing illegal aliens is necessary," the Members conclude in the letter.

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Rep. Hostettler, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration added, "The enforcement of our current immigration laws--especially worksite compliance--is essential to restoring the confidence of the American people in the rule of law. Given that the Basic Pilot Program is available to every employer in the United States, the Administration should place the elimination of the 'jobs magnet' at the top of the priority list."

Rep. Tancredo, the chairman of the House Immigration Reform Caucus added, "The days of bait-and-switch are over. This letter—signed by a large portion of the Republican conference—shows that the political momentum has changed in our favor. No guestworker plan will pass Congress without first securing the borders and enforcing current laws."

Rep. Smith, a former chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee, concluded, "We have lost control of our borders and endangered the lives of Americans by not enforcing immigration laws. For example, the current "catch and release" policy enables 85 percent of illegal immigrants who are apprehended to go free. It is unlawful to hire illegal immigrants but not a single employer was fined for doing so last year.

"Only a fraction of the vehicles crossing our borders are checked for illegal immigrants or illegal cargo. We have no system at our land borders to determine whether people whose short-term visas have expired have left the country. Finally, many illegal immigrants who have been convicted of aggravated felonies are released rather than deported."

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The letter was signed by the following 82 House Members: Hostettler (IN), Smith (TX), Tancredo (CO), Hayworth (AZ), Paul (TX), King (IA), Sullivan (OK), Rohrabacher (CA), Norwood (GA), Goode (VA), Marchant (TX), Culberson (TX), Weldon (FL), Coble (NC), Brown-Waite (FL), Duncan (TN), Sessions (TX), Bilirakis (FL), Jones (NC), Garrett (NJ), Gutknecht (MN), Barrett (SC), McCotter (MI), Deal (GA), Royce (CA), Sodrel (IN), Bradley (NH), Wamp (TN), Blackburn (TN), Ney (OH), Jenkins (TN), McKeon (CA), Poe (TX), Jo Ann Davis (VA), Burton (IN), Hunter (CA), Capito (WV), Hefley (CO), Cunningham (CA), Carter (TX), Istook (OK), Burgess (TX), Cubin (WY), Gary Miller (CA), Platts (PA), Stearns (FL), McHenry (NC), Akin (MO), Johnson (TX), Rogers (MI), Issa (CA), McCaul (TX), Myrick (NC), Weldon (PA), Hayes (NC), Bishop (UT), Westmoreland (GA), Aderholt (AL), Bachus (AL), Manzullo (IL), Foxx (NC), Bartlett (MD), Boozman (AR), Ryun (KN), Gingrey (GA), Miller (FL), Brady (TX), Gordon (TN), Everett (AL), Calvert (CA), Pickering (MS), Buyer (IN), Drake (VA), Graves (MO), Ramstad (MN), Pearce (NM), Kelly (NY), Lewis (KY), Shuster (PA), Forbes (VA), Hoekstra (MI), Neugebauer (TX).

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