

January 22, 2007

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Low Wage Immigrant Worker Coalition (LWIW), a collaborative of state and national advocates working to improve the conditions of immigrant workers, we write to express our deepest concern over the recent raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials at Swift & Co. plants. The manner in which these raids were conducted has proven harmful to U.S. families, businesses, and local economies. Furthermore, your administration's rationale for conducting these raids at this time seems irrational. We urge you to honor your commitment to comprehensive immigration reform by working closely with the Department of Homeland Security and Congress, as well as immigrant advocates, faith-based organizations, labor unions and businesses, to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation that gets at the root causes of our current immigration problems.

The reports that we have received from the communities where the raids were conducted are quite alarming.

- Racial profiling used to single out workers for questioning, resulted in legally authorized workers – and even U.S. citizens – being detained.
- Family members were not allowed to bring the documents proving legal status to some detained workers.
- Parents were detained without consideration for their children and other dependents. Countless U.S. citizen children relying on the goodwill of churches and other community members were left stranded facing an uncertain future just before the holidays.

We also have grave concerns about ICE's trampling of employees' federal labor rights and its disregard of unions' responsibility to defend those rights in the workplace. Federal law authorizes labor unions to represent all who are employees under the National Labor Relations Act in matters impacting their terms of employment. Equally critical, federal law requires labor unions to represent employees without regard to race, ethnicity, or immigration status. Union representatives witnessed outrageous conduct by ICE and were barred from providing employees information about their fundamental rights. ICE's conduct during the raids was not justified by any balancing of the interests that the relevant federal laws were enacted to protect.

These raids have separated families, shut down plants, and slowed the economies of entire regions. Yet the raids have not significantly reduced the size of the undocumented immigrant population, and have not rooted out unscrupulous employers who hire and exploit immigrant workers. The current worksite enforcement strategy is simply ineffective, and the consequences are harmful to American workers and families.

The Swift raids only underscore the fact that Congress and the Administration must work together to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation that includes the enforcement of labor laws and strong protections for all workers in the U.S. In the meantime, we urge you to rethink the current enforcement strategy; it is ineffective and has serious negative consequences for American families and industries.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO  
Change to Win  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
Jobs With Justice  
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)  
National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)  
National Employment Law Project (NELP)  
National Immigration Law Center (NILC)

cc: Michael Chertoff, DHS