



**UPDATE FOR NCLR AFFILIATES,
LATINO ADVOCATES
ON THE IMMIGRATION COMPROMISE
April 6, 2006**

Colleagues:

Things are happening quickly on immigration reform in the U.S. Senate, and we're working to stay on top of developments and move the process forward. We thought it might be useful to update you on what we know about what's happening on immigration and to share some talking points which might be useful today. Here's what we know:

- As you know, the Senate Judiciary Committee passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill last week which would provide a path to legal status to approximately nine million of the 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. It also includes several other important provisions such as a temporary worker program with strong labor protections, reductions in family immigration backlogs, the "AgJOBS" bill (which would legalize more than a million farmworkers), and the "DREAM Act." The bill also contains harsh enforcement measures which are similar to the Sensenbrenner bill which passed the House last December.
- A bipartisan group of senators reached agreement this morning on a compromise proposal in an effort to gain the 60 votes needed to move forward in the Senate. The only thing about this agreement which is different from the Judiciary Committee bill has to do with the legalization provisions. This means that everything else that was in the Committee bill is still in, including positive measures such as "AgJOBS" and the "DREAM Act" as well as the troubling enforcement provisions, including those that give state and local law enforcement officials the authority to enforce immigration law.
- The legalization provisions changed in the following way:
 1. Undocumented immigrants who have been in the country for more than five years will be treated as they would be treated under the Kennedy-McCain bill (work for six years, pay taxes, learn English, pay a fine, and then adjust to legal permanent residence).
 2. Undocumented immigrants who have been in the country longer than two years but less than five years would also be able to legalize, but would have to do this through a temporary worker program, and would have to return briefly to their home countries once during a three-year period to qualify. They will also have a path to permanent residence, but it will take a year or two longer for them to adjust than for immigrants who have been in this country for more than five years. If this compromise were to become law, the same approximately ten million people would be able to legalize under the Kennedy-McCain bill, which NCLR supports.

- The compromise also adds important labor protections to the temporary worker program (prevailing wage protections, additional inspectors for the Department of Labor).
- The senators who reached this agreement are still negotiating over process. In particular, they are working to secure an agreement regarding the conditions for Senate debate (this is important to prevent negative amendments). In addition, they are working on a second agreement with respect to the structure of a House/Senate conference committee. This is very important because even a good Senate bill still needs to be reconciled with the House bill; favorable terms for this negotiation are essential to the outcome.
- To reiterate, this process is far from over. The compromise must still be debated on the Senate floor, where amendments can and will likely be offered, and even if it passes the Senate, the bill must still go to conference with the House of Representatives. In short, it will be weeks before anything final comes out of Congress. This is especially important to remember in order to discourage those who may use this as an opportunity to drum up business among members of the community.
- Of course, we are continuing to work to address the negative provisions of the Senate and House bills.

We have prepared some general talking points that we hope you find useful. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

TALKING POINTS ON IMMIGRATION COMPROMISE

- This is an important step in the right direction toward a comprehensive solution to immigration reform. It is likely to put millions of undocumented workers who are contributing every day to this country's economic strength and vitality on a path to permanent status.
- But this process is far from over. We must keep in mind the considerable public concern that the Sensenbrenner bill has raised; many of those provisions are still in the Senate bill. The bipartisan group of senators who agreed to the language of this bill are still discussing the terms for Senate debate and for engaging in negotiations with the House on a final product. It is essential that these procedural issues be resolved favorably in order to ensure a positive final outcome.
- We need to support the bipartisan team of legislators who are working to achieve a final result that reflects what this bill can do to bring undocumented workers out of the shadows and eliminate the great harm that will be caused by the House bill.
- The key message for the community is that, while this is a hopeful sign, people need to hold tight, keep informed, and stay in contact with trusted community organizations. The best thing people can do is: first, make sure they are gathering important paperwork (pay stubs, tax records, etc.) and second, actively participate in the April 10 events to ensure that their voices are heard in opposition to punitive measures and in support of comprehensive immigration reform.