

**TESTIMONY OF COREY A. STEWART
CHAIRMAN, PRINCE WILLIAM BOARD OF COUNTY SUPERVISORS
TO
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, REFUGEES, BORDER
SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW
H.R. 1645, SECURITY THROUGH REGULARIZED IMMIGRATION AND A
VIBRANT ECONOMY ACT OF 2007 (STRIVE)**

SEPTEMBER 6, 2007

Madam Chair, Ranking Member King and members of the Subcommittee, I am Corey A. Stewart, Chairman of the Prince William, Virginia Board of County Supervisors. I have served in this Countywide elected position since November 2006. Previously, I served as the Occoquan Magisterial District Supervisor starting in January 2004 until assuming my current position.

Prince William County is located in Northern Virginia approximately 25 miles south of Capitol Hill on I-95 or 30 miles west on I-66. Approximately two-thirds of our employed residents commute to jobs outside the County in the District of Columbia, Maryland, or Northern Virginia. The major job centers in the County include Marine Corps Base Quantico, Potomac Mills, and the Innovation Technology Park which includes a campus of George Mason University.

Prince William County has a population of approximately 400,000 and has grown by nearly 100,000 residents in the last 7 years. The County is the seventh wealthiest large locality in the United States. We are also a diverse and cosmopolitan community. Among the fastest growing groups in the County is the foreign born population. From 2000 to 2005, according to the US Census Bureau, the percentage of our population that is foreign born rose from 6.2% to 19.4%. Approximately one-third of this group is naturalized.

Prince William's high quality of life and economic opportunity has drawn talent from around the world, and legal immigration has been a tremendous asset to Prince William County. Many businesses are owned and operated by naturalized citizens and legal immigrants. One research institution located in the county specializing in the life sciences employs scientists of the former Soviet Union in an effort to prevent the spread of deadly bio-terror toxins. A local chain of supermarkets catering to the Hispanic population was recently honored by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce as one of the "Fantastic 50" Companies. We are very proud of the contribution they have made to our community and to our nation.

Like a lot of other communities throughout the country, the County has been facing the issue of illegal immigration and its secondary impacts upon our community. A serious

problem the County is facing is the presence of criminal street gangs. The County has been partnering with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other local law enforcement agencies through the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force to combat this problem. The Congress has appropriated federal funds for this task force due to the efforts of Congressmen Frank R. Wolf, Tom Davis and Jim Moran. Our law enforcement partners at ICE estimate that 18% to 30% of criminal gang members in Northern Virginia are illegal aliens. Over the three and a half years of the task force 368 gang members who are illegal aliens have been placed in deportation proceedings.

At last count, the percentage of inmates in our regional jail who are here illegally was 21%. These inmates are incarcerated for a variety of crimes ranging from murder and rape to drunken driving and drunk in public. While the jail receives some reimbursement from the Federal Government through the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, it only accounts for 10% of those costs.

The number of informal “day laborer” sites around the County in parking lots and convenience stores has grown over the last several years. We have received many complaints from store owners and residents about these sites. Oftentimes, customers have to navigate among crowds of men seeking work or drinking in public to get into the stores. Many such stores have lost business. After one enforcement action to close down one of these sites, some of those arrested were found to be in the country illegally.

As a result of these issues—as well as residential overcrowding and crowded schools and emergency rooms—citizens in our community have become enraged about the impact of illegal immigration and the effect that it is having on the County and their quality of life. My constituents believe that the Administration should enforce U.S. immigration laws. Because the Federal Government has failed to do this, the Board of County Supervisors has been forced to take bolder action on what is essentially a federal responsibility.

Locally, the County has taken a number of steps to address illegal immigration. The Prince William-Manassas Regional Jail Board, with the express urging of the Board of County Supervisors and the Manassas City Council, entered into a 287 (g) agreement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to turn over inmates who had been determined to be in this country illegally and completed their sentences to ICE for deportation proceedings. Since entering this agreement in mid-July, the jail has turned over 52 inmates to ICE. Another 59 inmates will be turned over once their sentences are complete while 47 others are under investigation for possible immigration violations. The Board of County Supervisors recently budgeted and appropriated \$1.4 million for this local effort. Most of these funds will be used to secure additional jail space and the remainder for training.

The County is also examining whether the County can lawfully prevent illegal aliens from receiving County services. There are some services that the federal government and Commonwealth of Virginia have already legislated that illegal aliens cannot receive such as Food Stamps. Other services must be provided to all regardless of their immigration status such as those provided through the Older Americans Act. Then there are a group

of services that the County may have the option of restricting to legal residents. The Board will be considering whether to require those who receive this last group of services to provide documentation they are in this country legally.

We respectfully request that Congress broaden the powers of local governments to enforce federal immigration law. Federal legislation needs to clearly enunciate our roles and the relevant authority. The following policy issues should be addressed:

Authority to enforce federal immigration law: The federal government must clearly state to what extent state and local governments may enforce federal immigration law. In particular, we request that Congress state explicitly that local law enforcement personnel may arrest persons based solely upon an immigration violation, whether civil or criminal. Local governments and law enforcement agencies need the greatest level of immunity afforded by both the federal and State governments to enforce federal immigration law.

State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP): The federal government needs to budget and appropriate a greater level of resources for SCAAP so that more than 10% of local government costs incurred in housing illegal aliens may be recovered.

ICE 287 (g) Program: Congress needs to budget and appropriate a greater level of resources, both human and otherwise, so that ICE may receive inmates identified as illegal aliens immediately upon the completion of local detention. ICE's limited detention capacity has resulted in severe limitations on this County's access to deportation resources. If this continues, the County will continue to incur tremendous costs to house illegal aliens. Furthermore, resources should be provided to deport illegal aliens who have completed local detention but whose crimes are not deemed to be among the "worst of the worst." These individuals are returned to the community upon completion of detention. Funding also needs to be provided for training of local law enforcement agencies.

Northern Virginia Gang Task Force: Federal funding for this and similar programs should increase substantially. The proposed FY 2008 budget passed by the House of Representatives in July provides \$1.5 million. This is \$1 million less than what was appropriated for FY 2006.

Madam Chair, thank you for inviting me to provide a local perspective on federal immigration issues and how these affect our community. I would be glad to stand for questions.