

American Immigration Lawyers Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 28, 2005

Contact: George Tzamaras
202-216-2410
gtzamaras@aila.com

President Bush Reengages Immigration Debate

WASHINGTON, D.C. – NOV. 28, 2005 -- The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) is pleased that President Bush today spoke out about the urgency for comprehensive immigration reform and indicated that border enforcement can only work if it is accompanied by deep and far reaching reforms to our nation's immigration laws.

AILA fully agrees with President Bush that our nation needs secure borders and safety from terrorist harm. But the only way to achieve these important goals is to reform our nation's immigration laws in a comprehensive way. An "enforcement-only" or "enforcement-first" approach, such as that being contemplated in both Houses of Congress, is doomed to fail and will not make our nation safe nor our borders secure.

The American people want a solution, not more money thrown at failed policies.

More enforcement of unrealistic policies will lead to more strain on the system, more chaos and deaths at the border, and ultimately less security. Real enforcement will remain an illusion until we fundamentally reform our immigration laws.

To truly guarantee our security, and to honor our great traditions as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants, President Bush must support, and Congress must enact, legislation that:

- Restores legality and control to our nation's borders, shutting down smuggling and trafficking operations and the black market in fake documents;
- Restores and strengthens due process and the rule of law, not only at our borders, but also in our courts, in our workplaces and in our communities;
- Safeguards our nation's obligations to provide real protections for refugees seeking safety from persecution who may otherwise be returned to the hands of their persecutors by a rush to expand "expedited removal";
- Provides a new "break the mold" temporary worker program that is responsive to labor shortages in many sectors of our economy and that guarantees full labor protections for both native and temporary immigrant workers;
- Reunites families separated by extensive backlogs, artificially low caps, and lengthy processing delays; and
- Brings undocumented immigrants currently in the country out of the shadows and provides a path for those who work hard and contribute to our economy and society to pay a penalty for their previous unlawful entry and to *earn* permanent legal status and eventual integration through citizenship.

-MORE-

AILA calls on the Administration to put muscle behind President Bush's words, to increase its efforts to work with Congress to achieve truly comprehensive reform which must include not only a new temporary worker program, but also a program that will make our nation more secure by providing a way for those currently living in the shadows to come forward and to earn legal status so that they can continue to contribute to building and strengthening our great nation.

Without truly comprehensive immigration reform, individuals who enter this country illegally will continue to try to do so, regardless of the fences, drones, or personnel we put at our borders. We call on our representatives in the House to take a comprehensive approach to immigration reform when they return from their Thanksgiving recess, and we urge the Senate to do the same when they address these important issues in February 2006. We believe that the bi-partisan McCain/Kennedy/Kolbe/Flake/Gutierrez bill (The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 (S. 1033 / H.R. 2330) establishes the necessary elements for realistic reform and provide an essential framework for this debate.

###