



Janet Murguía, President

National Office
Raul Yzaguirre Building
1126 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202.785.1670
Fax: 202.776.1792
www.nclr.org

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Dear Representative:

We are writing with profound concern and deep urgency to ask you not to support or cosponsor immigration enforcement legislation (SAVE Act) which has been recently introduced by Rep. Heath Shuler (D-NC), and has been cosponsored by, among others, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO). Let us be as clear as possible: this legislation will do nothing to fix the nation's broken immigration system. But it will break families and communities, as well as our nation's long commitment to fairness and justice. As leaders of a Latino community which is experiencing extraordinary hardship as a result of this ugly, unproductive immigration debate, we urge you to reject this harmful legislation.

It is clear to us that the nation must enforce its laws; all of our organizations are supporters of immigration legislation that includes strong enforcement provisions. But Congress has strengthened our enforcement regime numerous times, including vigorous provisions that have been in place for more than a decade. We have quintupled the resources being spent on immigration enforcement during that decade. If enforcement by itself were effective in addressing the phenomenon of illegal immigration, the problem would have been resolved long ago. We believe the broken immigration system must be addressed at its core, with provisions to address the presence of 12 million undocumented immigrants in our communities and our workforce. Moreover, the Congress must address the fact that there is no meaningful legal path for the workers who currently enter our workforce without documentation.

The vigorous enforcement environment in which we currently find ourselves has caused tremendous hardship for immigrants as well as the larger Latino community. A recent report by NCLR and the Urban Institute documented extraordinary hardships faced by American children who are separated from their parents in immigration enforcement actions. As many as 12,000 American children live in families who have been torn apart in this way, creating unwarranted new challenges to our nation's schools, childcare centers, and child protection agencies. Every week we receive new reports of racial profiling, communities fearful of contacting police to report crimes, and families afraid to send their children to school. Enactment of the Shuler bill will mean more tragedy for our families and communities for the sake of a measure which is more about symbolism than substance.

We will not resolve our nation's immigration challenge by attempting to hound people out of the country. The hardships we create when we attempt it are profound; not only do they harm our communities, they do great damage to the values that Americans hold dear.

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LA RAZA: The Hispanic People of the New World

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to reject this harmful piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

League of United Latin American Citizens

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

National Council of La Raza