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## **FLOC Denounces New Crackdown on Immigrants**

On August 10 Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, and Secretary of Commerce, Carlos M. Gutierrez, held a joint press conference to announce a sweeping new crackdown on undocumented workers and employers. DHS's plans will do little except increase the feelings of fear and panic in immigrant communities which is already running at record levels. It will also increase the feeling of uncertainty small American farmers have. In fact, Baldemar Velasquez, President of FLOC, emphasizes that "our farmer employers are distraught that these new regulations will threaten our vibrant \$78 million dollar NW Ohio agricultural economy already plagued by labor shortages."

With the DHS announcement, it is clear that the immigration reform debate—limited as it was—that might have provided a path to legal status for the 8-12 million undocumented workers has ended and the only ideas being considered now are harsh enforcement-only policies.

Instead of helping to fix America's broken immigration system, enforcement-only plans will only result in the increased misery of millions of the hardest working people in this country; as previous raids and crackdowns have proven, it will do very little to reduce the immigrant population living in the country without legal status.

"We are handing the criminal element a greater opportunity to flourish in the multi-billion dollar fake ID and human trafficking business," said Baldemar Velasquez.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a 26-point list of "enforcement tools" they will use in their crackdown. The National Immigration Law Center reports DHS's plans include:

- \* Convert Social Security Administration "no-match letters" into an immigration enforcement tool. DHS announced it will issue 140,000 letters starting September 10th to employers questioning the status of 8 million workers.
- \* Increase civil fines against employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, and expand efforts to criminally prosecute employers;
- \* Increased militarization of the border with more Border Patrol agents, more border fences, and more cameras and radars;
- \* Expand detention facilities to house 31,000 people with no suggestion that widespread rights violations in the current facilities will be reviewed;
- \* Reduce access to court hearings to contest erroneous deportation orders;
- \* "Streamline" guestworker programs with no indication that the current recruitment problems FLOC has uncovered will be addressed;

Instead of bring undocumented workers out of the shadows and giving them a chance to bargain with their employers for a fair day's pay, this strategy will drive them deeper into the underground economy and into the hands of human traffickers and unscrupulous employers who will exploit them even further.

FLOC understands the need for national security, but we believe these new policies will not make our country safer. We need to stop picking on poor people, and go after the real criminals; not help their crooked businesses grow.

FLOC's position is clear. Whether immigrant workers have legal status or not, they deserve the basic labor and human rights that will allow them to live with dignity and respect.

For more information on the immigration issue, see the FLOC website on:

[Immigrant Rights](http://www.floc.com) (www.floc.com)