



The National Organization of Portuguese-Americans Press Release & Call to Action

May 12, 2010

Dear Friends of NOPA,

To better inform and empower our community, we will begin to send you NOPA's Action Alerts. To maximize the purpose and value of the alerts, please send us your comments and what types of issues you would like to see included. All comments and suggestions can be sent to info@nopa-us.org, or you can call NOPA's Executive Director, Francisco Semião, at 703-389-3512.

Thank you.

NOPA's Statement on Immigration Reform

The National Organization of Portuguese Americans (NOPA) recognizes that the United States' outdated immigration system is igniting counterproductive reactions throughout the country, like the recent passage of SB 1070 in Arizona. This law allows a police officer in Arizona to question and, if necessary, arrest and detain any person if the person fails to provide adequate identification and the officer suspects that the individual is in the United States unlawfully. While the law is extremely popular in the state, with 70 percent of Arizona voters approving of it and just 23 percent opposing it, it has raised controversy. As a response, Gov. Jan Brewer signed a follow-up bill on April 29th, approved by Arizona legislators, that makes revisions to SB 1070 -- changes she stated that should quell concerns that the original law would lead to racial profiling. With this new bill, no one can be asked about their immigration status unless they had committed an offense as a predicate to the police officer having stopped them.

Arizona is not the only state that has attempted to grapple with this serious issue. As of November 20, 2009, state legislatures enacted 222 laws and adopted 131 resolutions in 48 states, for a total of 353 laws and resolutions nationwide. This mix of state and local laws attempting to deal with the illegal immigration issue is both unworkable and dangerous. Immigration is a federal responsibility, and the time to act to fix our broken immigration system is now more urgent than ever. The Arizona controversy, regardless of anyone's personal position, only proves the point that the United States' immigration system is in dire need of updating to holistically and realistically address



the present situation. NOPA also recognizes that, throughout its history, immigrants have contributed to making the United States more vibrant and economically dynamic - our country is truly a nation of immigrants. Immigration policies must be adopted that will not only address the present, but also stand the test of time.

NOPA affirms its commitment to the rule of law and society, and strongly urges Congress and the President to work together to address the realities of today's immigration issues. NOPA is calling for immediate action to support a new process to admit temporary workers into the United States, impose tougher sanctions on employers who hire illegal immigrants, create new identification cards for immigrant workers, and adopt policies and procedures to streamline the backlog for those seeking to adjust their immigrant status legally.

NOPA's Four Principles of National Immigration Reform:

Strong Border Security and Interior Enforcement - The United States must commit to securing its border as a predicate to seeking any meaningful immigration reform. To accomplish this, the Federal Government must provide the border patrol with substantially more personnel, infrastructure, and technology to prevent those unlawfully attempting to enter the United States. Immigration reform must also expand interior enforcement efforts to provide Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel the resources needed to apprehend and deport criminal aliens, target employers who continue to ignore immigration laws, and those who overstay their visas. The United States must require the completion of an entry-exit system that will track whether all persons entering the United States on legal visas have left the country and will ensure their apprehension and deportation whenever they come in contact with any law enforcement officials, local, state, or federal. Concurrently with the foregoing, those individuals who are in the United States illegally must register as a first step in addressing this long-ignored issue.

Strong Employment Verification - Immigration reform must include a tough, fair, and effective employment verification system that holds employers accountable for knowingly hiring illegal workers. At a minimum, it must require all workers legally residing in the United States - citizens and legal immigrants-to obtain a new, fraud-proof Social Security card. Any employer who knowingly hires an unauthorized worker must face significant fines and, for repeat offenders, incarceration.

Economic Prosperity - Reform efforts must include a rational, legal immigration system as essential to ensuring America's future economic prosperity. A reformed immigration system must encourage talented immigrants to live and work in the United States and contribute productively to the economy while also discouraging businesses from using immigration laws as a means to obtain temporary and less-expensive foreign labor to replace capable American workers. Under a reformed immigration system, businesses must be able to obtain lower-skilled workers only when American citizens and residents are unavailable or unwilling to fill those jobs.



Fair Path to Legalization - Calls for mass deportation are impractical and would have a negative impact on small businesses and the United States economy in general. Immigration reform must provide a tough, fair, and practical system for illegal immigrants already in the country. Those who are in the United States without documentation must come forward, register, admit that they are here illegally, and pass background checks. After a several-year initial registration program, applicants would have to become reasonably proficient in English and knowledgeable in American civics, pay their debt to society, by paying a fine and back taxes, as a predicate to applying for permanent residency.

Unfortunately, despite the critical need for immigration reform, a lack of bipartisan resolve on this critical issue coupled with the realities of an election year make true universal immigration reform unlikely in the short term. However, NOPA will continue to promote this urgent issue and provide insights into its timely resolution.

If you have any questions about this statement, please contact NOPA's Immigration Policy Team at info@nopa-us.org or 703-389-3512.

Call to Action - Look Up and Contact Your Senators and Representative Today!

NOPA puts forth a call to action asking the Portuguese American community to contact their Representatives and Senators urging them to immediately act on comprehensive immigration reform.

To look up and contact your US Senator or Representative, please visit the following links and copy and paste your letter onto the appropriate field:

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>

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