



Illegal Alien Protests and Boycotts: Fizzle, No Sizzle

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Making News—State Winks at Illegal Immigration

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Cracks Developing in Organized Labor's Support for Illegal Aliens and Amnesty

Even as American workers across the country were being displaced by the influx of illegal aliens, or have had their wages and working conditions decimated by illegal immigration, the union movement remained largely silent. In recent years, in an attempt to boost shrinking membership by signing up illegal alien workers, the leadership of the American union movement has become a vocal advocate for an illegal alien amnesty.

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Around the Country

Until recently, state and local governments dealt with community complaints about the impact of illegal immigration with the familiar refrain: "It's not our responsibility." With the effects of mass illegal immigration ravaging communities from coast to coast, local governments are deciding they can no longer ignore the problem and wait for the federal government to act. Almost weekly, states, counties and cities get aboard the train of jurisdictions deciding to act locally.

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Choose Black America Blasts Government's Failure to Protect American Workers at a New Orleans Press Conference on the First Anniversary of Katrina

Choose Black America (CBA), a national alliance of black leaders, headed to New Orleans to commemorate the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina which devastated the Gulf Coast region and to draw attention to immigration policies that are victimizing local workers a second time. While hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents lost their homes (and many lost their lives) as a result of Katrina and have been scattered across the country, many contractors receiving government rebuilding money are bringing in foreign workers, most illegal, to do the reconstruction of the area.

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While illegal immigration reform is clearly an issue that must be addressed by our federal government, states are increasingly considering legislation to implement reforms locally. I recently called a special session to address specific ways to deal with the challenges of illegal immigration in Colorado. While the debate was predictably heated, one key piece of legislation was crafted and passed.

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As large-scale illegal immigration affects more and more communities across the country, local governments are taking action to try to limit the impact on their jurisdictions. Hazelton, Pennsylvania, about 80 miles from Philadelphia, has attracted national and international attention for its efforts to prevent illegal aliens from renting apartments or working within city limits. But Hazelton is not unique. Cities, towns, even entire states, are taking similar steps to deal locally with the consequences of the federal government's refusal to enforce immigration laws on a national level.

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Outrage of the Month: In Texas, School Children Recite the Pledge of Allegiance . . . To the Mexican Flag

As the last school year came to an end, a number of school districts around the country banned displays of the American flag, calling them a provocation in the intense atmosphere created by the illegal alien protest rallies and boycotts. As the new school year got under way in one Texas town near Houston, a new flag controversy arose. To mark Mexican Independence Day on September 16, volunteers at the Velasco Elementary School in Freeport passed out Mexican flags to students at a school assembly, followed by a recitation of the Mexican pledge of allegiance in Spanish led by the volunteers. School officials deny that the students were required to recite the Mexican pledge of allegiance, though some students and parents dispute the claim.

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Reformer Corner—Mississippi Legislator Leads the Charge Against Illegal Immigration

As the problem of mass illegal immigration spreads to every corner of the country, one Mississippi legislator has planted himself firmly in the middle of the effort to educate the public and fight for legislation to deal with illegal immigration in his state. Representative Mike Lott, a seven-year member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, has slowly but surely carved out his niche as the leader of the illegal immigration fight in Mississippi. His travels and speaking engagements have led him from one end of the state to the other, as he appears on talk radio programs, is interviewed in the print media, and meets with local government and community leaders.

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Voter Registration Drives Do Not Live Up to the Hype

The illegal alien advocacy network was able to turn hundreds of thousands of people out onto the streets of America's cities earlier this year to demand amnesty and assorted other benefits for people in the United States illegally, but beyond the media spectacle they appear to have fallen far short of the organizers' expectations. The threat, "Today we march, tomorrow we vote!" chanted repeatedly at these rallies now appears somewhat hollow. Pro-amnesty organizations promised to register a million new voters in time for the November election, but it now appears they will fall well short of that mark.

In fact, precisely the opposite appears to be happening. The spectacle of illegal aliens and their supporters taking to the streets under Mexican and other foreign flags, demanding to be rewarded with amnesty and other benefits for having broken the law, seems to have solidified public support for stronger immigration enforcement. Opposition to amnesty and guest workers now appears to be an issue that will drive voters' decisions at the polls in November.

An analysis by the Associated Press in September found that this spring's illegal alien marches have not translated into large increases in voter registration. Even in the metropolitan areas that saw the largest demonstrations, the number of new voters lags significantly behind 2004. "I was anticipating a huge jump in registration — I didn't see it," California political analyst Jesse Cervantes told AP.

Even prime advocates for illegal aliens, like the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project admit that the wave of new voters they had anticipated has not materialized. "It's a hard sell," conceded Avelino Andazola, a spokesperson for the group. Others like Nativo Lopez of the militant Hermandad Mexicana have begun pointing fingers at others in the illegal alien rights coalition and at the major political parties for the failure to register large numbers of new voters.

From Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., a new round of pro-amnesty protests scheduled for the Labor Day weekend failed to turn out even a small fraction of the people who took to the streets just a few months earlier. While perhaps as many as 500,000 people took part in demonstrations in Los Angeles this spring, only about 1,500 are estimated to have participated in the Labor Day march. The low turn-out reflects a growing sense among illegal aliens and their supporters that the political tide has turned against them. "In the spring when people were marching, there was a real sense that this could be within our grasp," said Cecilia Munoz of the National Council of La Raza. "It's clear to people now that we have a long way to go before this is going to happen."

Notwithstanding the shrill rhetoric of the illegal alien advocacy network, public opinion polls indicate that amnesty for illegal aliens is not particularly appealing to Hispanic voters around the country. A national survey conducted in August by former Clinton pollsters James Carville and Stanley Greenberg found that Hispanic voters base their decisions on bread-and-butter issues like the economy, jobs and the war in Iraq (much like the rest of the population), and that substantial numbers of American Hispanics oppose amnesty and other benefits for illegal aliens.

While these results may be a surprise to politicians, they come as no surprise to FAIR. One of the consequences of the illegal alien protest rallies was the formation of a new American Hispanic organization, You Don't Speak for Me!, (www.DontSpeakForMe.org) as a way of responding to the popular perception that the illegal aliens represented the views of Hispanic citizens. Since its formation in May, You Don't Speak for Me! has gained a national reputation, participating in Congressional press conferences and in the national media in support of immigration enforcement.

Immigration Enforcement Seen as a Winning Issue

While the pro-illegal alien organizers are having a hard time registering voters, or even turning out people for rallies, immigration enforcement has become a galvanizing issue for voters in the rest of the country. In a front page story in early September, The New York Times heralded "In Bellwether District, GOP Runs on Immigration." The article focuses on a Colorado race to fill a vacant congressional seat, but also noted that political insiders have recognized that a strong stance on immigration enforcement could mean the difference between winning and losing in many closely contested elections this fall.

"Immigration is an issue that is really popping," Dan Allen, a Republican strategist told the Times. "It is an issue that independents are paying attention to as well," he added. In Colorado, and in many other parts of the country, Republican candidates are running away from President Bush's support for a guest worker amnesty program, fearful that being tied to him on this issue will spell political doom.

In the Republican primary to fill a vacant House seat in Arizona on September 12, Randy Graf, running hard on an immigration enforcement platform, captured the party's nomination in spite of strong support from the national party for his primary opponent. Graf, who was one of the architects of Arizona's Proposition 200 approved by voters in 2004, pulled off a comfortable victory based on his opposition to a guest worker amnesty bill and his support for a comprehensive approach to immigration enforcement.

According to many political analysts, these two congressional districts may be a preview of many other races across the country, as both parties struggle for control of Congress. These final few weeks before the November 7 elections (this is the last issue of the FAIR Immigration Report that you will receive prior to the election) present immigration reform activists with the best opportunity yet to shape the future direction of this issue. With both parties competing for every vote, this election could mean a new Congress next year that understands that they will have the support of the American public for passing and implementing a comprehensive immigration enforcement package in 2007.

House Takes a Step Toward Comprehensive Security and Enforcement, Funds Border Fence Construction in 2007

Buoyed by positive public feedback from the summer of immigration hearings around the country, House leadership moved to implement at least one provision of H.R. 4437, its comprehensive immigration enforcement bill. In September, Speaker Dennis Hastert and other House leaders announced that \$1.8 billion would be earmarked in the Fiscal Year 2007 (which began on Oct. 1) budget for construction of 700 miles of security fencing along the southern border.

The House wasted no time in making good on its pledge. By a 283-138 vote, the House approved H.R. 6061, the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which in addition to 700 miles of border fencing authorizes aerial surveillance, cameras, satellite monitoring and other technological improvements in border security.

The move by the House leadership is an important step in the right direction on immigration enforcement. The timing of the announcement — as the political campaign season moves in to full swing — also indicates a growing recognition that a strong stance on immigration enforcement could be the key to victory in November. Rather than wait for a possible lame duck session after the election, the House leadership has decided to move forward for funding with much needed border security measures immediately. The \$1.8 billion authorization for the fence and other security enhancements will have to be reconciled with the Senate, which approved only 370 miles of border fencing in its immigration bill.

FAIR first recommended fencing and other security measures in the 1980s, and we are delighted to see that the congressional leadership is embracing that position. In a year when the White House and Senate leaders have exerted considerable effort to link improvements in immigration enforcement to a guest worker amnesty bill, the House leadership's decision to include funding for a border fence with no strings attached is an important victory for immigration reform advocates.

While we are heartened by this latest development in the House, FAIR is continuing to stress that this is only a first step and that no one can yet claim that immigration enforcement has been dealt with. Without meaningful interior enforcement — especially a crackdown on employers who hire illegal aliens — the enhanced border security measures will only have a limited impact. FAIR will be pressing members of Congress to implement the rest of the immigration enforcement package in a lame duck session, or to place it high on the agenda for the new Congress when it convenes in January.

Department of Justice to Border Patrol Agents: Do Your Job, Go to Prison

FAIR, You Don't Speak For Me! and Congressional Leaders Go to Bat for Two Border Patrol Officers

It is no secret that controlling illegal immigration has not been a priority for an administration that is more intent on maintaining a steady flow of low-wage labor than on securing borders. Policy directives from Washington have made it clear to the men and women who patrol our borders that vigorous enforcement and pursuit of illegal aliens is strongly discouraged. But until recently, nobody really knew how much.

Border Patrol agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Alonso Compean now understand that taking the responsibility of protecting America's borders too seriously could cost them 20 years in prison. In February 2005, Ramos and Compean were patrolling the increasingly lawless stretch of border east of El Paso when they encountered a known Mexican drug smuggler, Osvaldo Aldrete-Davila. While attempting to apprehend Aldrete-Davila, the suspect assaulted Agent Compean. Agent Ramos, coming to the aid of his partner and believing that the suspect was armed, fired his weapon at Aldrete-Davila, wounding him as he attempted to flee back into Mexico. In addition to the attack on a Border Patrol Officer, Aldrete-Davila's vehicle was loaded with nearly 800 pounds of marijuana.

Had Ramos and Compean served in any other law enforcement agency in the country, they would have received commendations for heroism. But in the politically charged atmosphere of immigration law enforcement, the two agents found themselves being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's office for assault with a deadly weapon and for violating the drug smuggler's constitutional rights. Ramos and Compean were convicted in March and were to be sentenced — possibly to as much as 20 years each — in early September.

FAIR, together with You Don't Speak for Me!, a newly formed organization of American Hispanics who support enforcement of U.S. immigration laws, believed that the prosecution of Ramos and Compean was a miscarriage of justice and was also meant to send a signal to other Border Patrol agents. To assist the agents and their families, FAIR has set up a Web site, www.JusticeForTheBorderPartol.com. The Web site also allows people to sign a petition demanding that the case against Ramos and Compean be reopened and their verdicts set aside.

The cause of Ramos and Compean has also been taken up by members of Congress as diverse as Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and a group of Republican House members led by Representative Walter Jones (R-N.C.). Sen. Feinstein sent a letter to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales asking him to review the case and is also seeking a full hearing on the matter by the Judiciary Committee.

Congressman Jones, with the assistance of FAIR, organized a Capitol Hill press conference with other leading members, National Border Patrol Council President T.J. Bonner, and Uvalde County (Texas) Sheriff Terry Crawford on September 7, the date the two agents were to be sentenced. Thanks to the publicity generated by FAIR and other supporters of immigration enforcement, the sentencing has been postponed.

FAIR's close working relationship with pro-immigration enforcement members of Congress and our extensive media contacts have helped shine a spotlight on the ordeal of Agents Ramos and Compean and the government's efforts to send a message to other Border Patrol officers. The extensive publicity has resulted in their case being discussed widely on talk radio and on the cable news networks.

While Ramos and Compean still face possible 20-year sentences, the future for the drug smuggler Aldrete-Davila is a whole lot brighter. In return for his testimony against the two agents, Aldrete-Davila was granted immunity from prosecution by the government, he received treatment for his injuries at an El Paso hospital courtesy of the American taxpayers, and he is suing the government for \$5 million for the alleged violation of his civil rights.

Making News

In early August, Gov. Chris Gregoire of Washington sent the federal government a bill to cover the costs of incarcerating criminal illegal aliens. In an op-ed published in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on August 16, FAIR noted that Washington State had helped create the problem of illegal immigration and that the governor had an obligation to enact more responsible policies before sending a bill to the federal government.

State Winks at Illegal Immigration

by Dan Stein

Gov. Chris Gregoire recently made some headlines by sending the federal government a \$50 million bill for the cost of incarcerating criminal illegal immigrants. We wish her and the taxpayers of Washington luck. For all the chance the state of Washington has of getting a check from the federal government, Gregoire might just as well have saved the postage.

There is also a strong case to be made that Washington does not deserve to have the taxpayers of the other 49 states defray the costs of incarcerating illegals who commit crimes in that state. Washington, and especially the state's dominant metropolitan area, Seattle, have been willing accomplices to illegal immigration.

As recently as June 2002, the Seattle Police Department reaffirmed a policy directive that instructs officers not to inquire about the immigration status of people they encounter in the normal course of doing their jobs. There are, of course, circumstances when it is necessary for police to turn a blind eye, but Seattle has gone well beyond that point and has adopted a blanket sanctuary policy toward illegal immigrants.

The lax attitude toward illegal immigration does not end at the Seattle city limits. According to a 2005 report by the Congressional Research Service, Washington is one of 15 states that do not require driver's license applicants to show proof of legal U.S. residence. That is but one example of how Washington winks at illegal immigration, making it an attractive place for illegals to take up residence. Gregoire and other state leaders should not be surprised that criminal illegals are taking advantage of the state's don't ask, don't tell policy.

Faced with mounting costs and a growing number of criminal illegal immigrants, other state and local governments have taken steps in recent years to make themselves less hospitable to illegal immigrants. Without turning themselves into immigration cops, many police departments have received federal training allowing their officers to detain individuals suspected of being in the country illegally. Others have gone further, by denying illegal immigrants access to non-essential government services and benefits, enforcing anti-day labor ordinances, and even going after businesses that employ them.

Those state and local governments that have taken reasonable steps to discourage illegal immigrants from settling in their midst have a legitimate claim on federal dollars to reimburse them for the costs they incur as a result of the federal government's failure to exercise its own responsibilities to enforce immigration laws. Those jurisdictions that do not cooperate in immigration law enforcement — and in the case of cities such as Seattle, actually create impediments to such enforcement — have no business complaining about the costs of illegal immigration.

Rather than the occasional publicity stunt of sending a bill to the federal government that will never get paid in any event, the nation's governors have an opportunity to play a constructive role in solving what has become a national problem. The governors — the people whose budgets are most directly affected by illegal immigration — should sit down with federal officials and work out a series of conditions under which they would be automatically entitled to reimbursement for the costs of illegal immigration.

A reasonable set of conditions to trigger federal reimbursement should include: requiring proof of legal residence to obtain a driver's license and non-essential state services and benefits; barring acceptance of foreign consular-issued documents as legitimate ID; and routine cooperation between local police and federal immigration authorities. To be sure, there are further steps that state and local governments could reasonably take to protect their treasuries and the safety of local citizens, but these should be the bare minimum requirements before dashing off a bill to the feds and putting out a news release.

Maybe the disappointment of sitting by her mailbox waiting for the federal check that will never arrive might persuade the governor to lead her fellow governors toward a constructive set of policies that will make them part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Cracks Developing in Organized Labor's Support for Illegal Aliens and Amnesty

Even as American workers across the country were being displaced by the influx of illegal aliens, or have had their wages and working conditions decimated by illegal immigration, the union movement remained largely silent. In recent years, in an attempt to boost shrinking membership by signing up illegal alien workers, the leadership of the American union movement has become a vocal advocate for an illegal alien amnesty.

The views of organized labor's leadership on illegal immigration has been out of step with those of the rank and file union members who see illegal immigration as a mortal threat to their jobs and their hold on the middle class. With the recent split between the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the AFL-CIO, there is now an open rift within the labor movement over immigration.

Speaking over the Labor Day holiday, James Hoffa, president of the 1.4 million member Teamsters' union called for tighter border security and edged close to calling for dramatic reductions in overall immigration. In an interview with Bloomberg News Service, Hoffa stated, "We have to have time to digest the people that are here, assimilate them into the culture." The Teamsters are also on record as opposing the Senate guest worker amnesty bill.

Union opposition to amnesty is spreading across the country. In Milwaukee, Local 75 of the Plumbers and Gas Fitters Union declined to participate in this year's Labor Day parade because of the inclusion of Voces de la Frontera, an illegal alien advocacy group that is active in the upper Midwest. As illegal immigration has spread into that region of the country, American workers have been losing jobs and wages.

While unions like the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) have been at the forefront of organizing pro-amnesty demonstrations around the country, there is clearly a rift in the labor movement about this issue. In recent months, FAIR eastern region field coordinator Sandra Gunn has addressed numerous organized labor meetings with extremely favorable results. Along with local activist groups around the country, labor-based groups are becoming increasingly active in support of immigration enforcement, some of whom have begun working with FAIR.

Around the Country

North Carolina

Thanks in part to a growing network of immigration reform groups in the state, the North Carolina General Assembly approved four provisions designed to make it more difficult for illegal aliens to live in the state. In August, Democratic Governor Mike Easley signed them into law. As a result, North Carolina's notoriously lax driver's license issuance policy will be changed to require applicants to have a valid Social Security number. All new government employees in the state will be screened using the Basic Pilot Program, and state and local police will be given wider latitude to enforce immigration laws.

One of the groups instrumental in achieving this important victory in North Carolina is NC Listen, www.nclisten.com, which has worked closely with FAIR to mobilize public support for immigration enforcement. Like FAIR, NC Listen is not resting on its laurels. In a press release hailing Gov. Easley's signing of the legislation, the group vowed to keep pressing ahead. "We will continue to press other immigration reform issues yet to be taken care of, like making sure workers on state contracts must be checked for eligibility as a legal resident, rescinding drivers licenses earlier issued to illegals, restricting illegal alien access to non-emergency state and local government services, and making English the official state language," vowed NC Listen's president Ron Woodard.

Ohio

Ohio is not just a political swing state; it is the political swing state that is seen by political observers as the most accurate barometer of national trends. As candidates in Ohio gear up for the November elections, they are discovering that immigration is very much on the minds of the voters. In response, Assistant House Majority Whip Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) has rushed a draft immigration enforcement bill to the Judiciary Committee of the State House. The Midwest is a region with a growing base of immigration reform groups and FAIR's national field director Susan Tully has spent a considerable amount of time organizing activists in Ohio and other states in the region. FAIR members in the Midwest who would like to take a more active role in promoting immigration reform locally should contact Susan at (608) 675-3400, or stully@fairus.org.

Arizona

Supporters of Proposition 200, the 2004 ballot initiative aimed at curbing illegal immigration to the state, have successfully fought back yet another challenge to the law. Illegal alien advocates who were unsuccessful in their challenge of the provisions of the law that bar illegal aliens from receiving public benefits were back in court seeking to overturn the provision that requires voters to show identification when they register to vote and come to the polls. On September 11, a day before the state held primary elections, U.S. District Court Judge Roslyn Silver refused to block the requirement that voters produce proof of identity. Judge Silver wrote in her decision that the challengers "have not shown a strong likelihood of success on the merits, the balance of hardships favor the defendants and the public interest would not be advanced by granting the injunction."

Michigan

Michigan, which has lost seats in Congress in each of the last three decennial reapportionments because illegal aliens are counted in the Census for the purpose of determining how many seats in Congress each state is allotted, is trying to avoid making it four in a row in 2010. In early September, the Michigan legislature overwhelmingly approved a resolution urging a constitutional amendment that will bar illegal aliens from being factored into the equation for congressional reapportionment. Among the very first efforts by FAIR when it was established in 1979 was to file a lawsuit challenging the 1980 congressional reapportionment because illegal aliens were gaining representation in Congress at the expense of U.S. citizens in Michigan and other states. FAIR again challenged the reapportionment after the 1990 Census. Both suits were dismissed on technical grounds.

Choose Black America Blasts Government's Failure to Protect American Workers at a New Orleans Press Conference on the First Anniversary of Katrina

Choose Black America (CBA), a national alliance of black leaders, headed to New Orleans to commemorate the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina which devastated the Gulf Coast region and to draw attention to immigration policies that are victimizing local workers a second time. While hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents lost their homes (and many lost their lives) as a result of Katrina and have been scattered across the country, many contractors receiving government rebuilding money are bringing in foreign workers, most illegal, to do the reconstruction of the area.

The August 29 press conference included a video presentation of the story of some 70 American workers from Mobile, Alabama, who had traveled to Biloxi, Mississippi, to take reconstruction jobs. After about ten days on the job these mainly black workers were told by their employer that their services were no longer required, because "The Mexicans are here." The panel of CBA representatives, headlined by nationally syndicated radio talk show host Armstrong Williams, discussed how many American citizens who desperately need those jobs to restore not only their homes, but their livelihoods, are being systematically discriminated against with the approval of the government.

CBA chairman Dr. Frank Morris asserted that many of the same residents who had been failed once by the government's inadequate response to the hurricane, are being failed a second time by the government's failure to protect them against an influx of illegal aliens who are willing to work for lower wages. A year ago, Morris said, the Gulf Coast residents "were victims of an act of God. As if that were not bad enough, they were victimized a second time by an act of greed."

At the news conference, the leaders of CBA called upon the government to enforce laws against hiring illegal immigrants and allow local residents who survived the devastating hurricane and broken levees the much needed opportunity to find jobs in the reconstruction effort. More information about CBA and the New Orleans news conference can be found at their web site, www.ChooseBlackAmerica.com.

Significant Illegal Immigration Reform Passed in Colorado

By Colorado Governor Bill Owens, Guest Columnist

While illegal immigration reform is clearly an issue that must be addressed by our federal government, states are increasingly considering legislation to implement reforms locally. I recently called a special session to address specific ways to deal with the challenges of illegal immigration in Colorado. While the debate was predictably heated, one key piece of legislation was crafted and passed.

In all, thirteen bills were passed that pertain to illegal immigration. These addressed such issues as employment verification, making it a felony for non-citizens to vote, tax penalties for employers who do not prove citizenship of employees, and two measures that will be referred to the voters this November. These bills were improvements on our existing laws, but many were weakened to the point that they will be minimally effective.

There was one critical piece of legislation that was not weakened and has proven to be an extremely effective tool for states to crackdown on illegal immigration.

Colorado House Bill 1023 provides that state and local governments shall not provide public benefits (as expansively defined in 8 U.S.C. §1621) to individuals eighteen years of age or older unlawfully present in the United States. This includes grants, retirement, welfare, health, housing, unemployment, professional licensing, and postsecondary education benefits-most local, state and federal benefits.

Federal law actually already restricts these benefits to those legally in the United States (See 8 U.S.C. § 1621). The problem has been there is no uniform system to ensure compliance with this federal requirement. HB 1023 solves this inconsistency by installing a state compliance verification process which actually makes the expansive federal restriction on benefits effective.

The key to the Colorado law is stringent verification process. Before an individual receives any of these public benefits, they must prove citizenship through a three step process: 1) produce secure photo identification; 2) complete and sign an affidavit; and 3) the affidavit must be confirmed through the federal S.A.V.E. program. This process will ensure and confirm that only individuals lawfully present in the United States receive public benefits. Unlike Georgia, which only has an affidavit verification process, the requirement that applicants must provide secure identification will ensure this restriction is enforced.

Governors now face the difficult task of minimizing state costs for illegal immigrants, deterring future illegal immigration to our state, and doing so in a fair and humane manner. I believe that Colorado has accomplished this balance in the important area of restricting state and local benefits to individuals lawfully present in the United States. I recently sent a summary of this legislation to each of my fellow Governors in hopes they will consider supporting similar legislation in their states.

This is obviously one small piece to a very large puzzle, however, it is important for states to recognize that they can and should do their part to restrict and minimize the burdens caused by illegal immigration.

Bill Owens is completing his second term as Governor of the State of Colorado.

Immigration Reform Law Institute Works with Local Governments to Establish Enforceable Measures to Halt Illegal Immigration

As large-scale illegal immigration affects more and more communities across the country, local governments are taking action to try to limit the impact on their jurisdictions. Hazelton, Pennsylvania, about 80 miles from Philadelphia, has attracted national and international attention for its efforts to prevent illegal aliens from renting apartments or working within city limits. But Hazelton is not unique. Cities, towns, even entire states, are taking similar steps to deal locally with the consequences of the federal government's refusal to enforce immigration laws on a national level.

While these local governments are expert in crafting local laws and ordinances, most are not familiar with the intricacies of immigration law, leaving them vulnerable to legal challenges from the ACLU and other illegal alien advocacy groups. To combat the well-funded influence of groups like the ACLU and a host of other immigration advocacy groups in the legal system, FAIR established the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI). In recent years, IRLI has been revitalized by attorneys Michael Hethmon and Leah Durant, who have been running an aggressive campaign to break the stranglehold of open borders advocacy groups on the courts.

As Hazelton and other cities have moved to crackdown on immigration locally, IRLI crafted a Model Illegal Immigration Relief Ordinance to assist these local efforts. The meticulously researched provisions of IRLI's model ordinance will allow local governments to implement policies that discourage illegal aliens from settling within their jurisdictions and which will stand up to legal challenges by the illegal alien advocacy groups.

IRLI's efforts have been embraced by many local governments struggling with the impact of mass illegal immigration. After reviewing IRLI's research, Hazelton decided to substitute the IRLI language for its own. Mayor Lou Barletta and the city council stressed that the substitution of the language crafted by IRLI does not represent a change in the city's commitment to block illegal aliens from renting apartments and working in Hazelton, but rather to protect the city against legal challenges and to make sure that their efforts conform to the law. As a result of the publicity received by Hazelton, other jurisdictions are also seeking assistance from IRLI in instituting similar policies.

The emergence of IRLI as a nationally recognized legal advocacy organization represents an important step forward in the immigration reform effort. From enforcing anti-day labor policies, to challenging illegal policies that grant in-state tuition benefit for illegal aliens, to working with local governments to write legally enforceable ordinances, IRLI has become a counterbalance to a well-funded effort on the other side of the debate. For decades, pro-illegal alien and open border advocacy groups have been able to achieve in the courts what they have been unable to win politically, since there was no viable legal advocacy group to challenge their countless lawsuits.

With the national attention resulting from the efforts in Hazelton, IRLI and FAIR are sending a clear message to the illegal alien advocacy network that the courts are no longer their exclusive playground.

For more information, visit www.irli.org.

Outrage of the Month

In Texas, School Children Recite the Pledge of Allegiance . . . To the Mexican Flag

As the last school year came to an end, a number of school districts around the country banned displays of the American flag, calling them a provocation in the intense atmosphere created by the illegal alien protest rallies and boycotts. As the new school year got under way in one Texas town near Houston, a new flag controversy arose. To mark Mexican Independence Day on September 16, volunteers at the Velasco Elementary School in Freeport passed out Mexican flags to students at a school assembly, followed by a recitation of the Mexican pledge of allegiance in Spanish led by the volunteers. School officials deny that the students were required to recite the Mexican pledge of allegiance, though some students and parents dispute the claim.

A spokesman for the school district does not dispute that the assembly was called to commemorate Mexican Independence Day, or that the event included the pledge. However, he argued, "This was done totally as an educational, cultural activity." Educate them to what, one has to wonder.

Reformer Corner

Mississippi Legislator Leads the Charge Against Illegal Immigration

As the problem of mass illegal immigration spreads to every corner of the country, one Mississippi legislator has planted himself firmly in the middle of the effort to educate the public and fight for legislation to deal with illegal immigration in his state. Representative Mike Lott, a seven-year member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, has slowly but surely carved out his niche as the leader of the illegal immigration fight in Mississippi. His travels and speaking engagements have led him from one end of the state to the other, as he appears on talk radio programs, is interviewed in the print media, and meets with local government and community leaders.

Lott, a Republican, who hails from the small town of Petal in southern Mississippi, about 60 miles north of the Gulf Coast, has become increasingly alarmed by the rapidly growing number of foreign workers in his state, especially since the devastation inflicted by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

"For the past two years I have noticed more and more foreign workers in Mississippi, and the impact this phenomenon is having on workers in our state. Since Katrina, the numbers have increased exponentially, especially along the Gulf Coast, filling many of the jobs in the reconstruction effort. It is time we send a clear message as lawmakers that we expect employers in our state, particularly those with state contracts, to comply with immigration law," Lott says.

Lott puts the blame for America's illegal alien problem on employers and on the U.S. Government. "If employers knew they were likely to face stiff penalties for hiring illegal aliens, there would be much less reason for foreigners to cross our borders illegally. We also have a problem with our nation's leaders who are not protecting the borders, not enforcing immigration laws and allowing illegal aliens to receive government assistance as though they were U.S. citizens. People from other countries have every incentive imaginable to come to America. Where else in the world can a person go without a legal presence, get a job, get money from the government, educate their children at no cost, and not pay taxes? Only in America!" Lott argues.

Earlier this year, Representative Lott, who volunteers as Executive Director of the Mississippi Federation for Immigration Reform and Enforcement (www.mfire.org), introduced ten pieces of legislation involving both employers and illegal aliens. His goal: "...to send the message that, if you are not legally present in this country, Mississippi is not the place you want to be." Lott is currently putting the final touches on a comprehensive bill with several components that he plans to introduce during the upcoming legislative session that begins in January, 2007.

