



La Fe Policy Research and Education Center



*Promoviendo Bienestar para Familias y Comunidad con Conocimiento, Confianza y Poder
Promoting Family and Community Well-being through Knowledge, Trust and Empowerment*

February 26, 2009

The Honorable Leticia Van de Putte
P.O. Box 12068, Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Senator Van de Putte,

Texas, along with the rest of the nation, is amidst changes brought about by a historic election, a changing demography and real economic and health care crises. At this critical juncture, it is imperative to find a balance between conducting the State's business like school finance and addressing the policy needs of Texans, such as the uninsured, while developing good policies that will sustain Texans through this difficult time, such as expanding public safety nets. There is no room for misguided legislation that scapegoats immigrants for the failure of the federal government or for the economic woes of Texas. The thirty (30) plus bills relating to immigration have raised many concerns.

La Fe Policy Research and Education Center (La Fe PREC) is an organization that engages in efforts to create systematic changes to social and health policy through *policy analysis, education, leadership, and advocacy*. La Fe PREC is committed to the bienestar (well-being) and health status of the Latino community and realizes that access and quality is largely influenced by the broken immigration system.

For those reasons **we do not support** policies that:

*Utilize **Employer sanctions** as a means to economically isolate immigrants by penalizing Texas employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers.* Employer Sanctions are not an effective tool as a deterrent for immigration. The experience of Federal Employer Sanctions did more harm than good and saw a rise in discrimination. Most employers do not knowingly attempt to break laws. By penalizing employers, you indirectly and directly penalize legally authorized workers and hurt the Texas economy.

*Create obstacles and deterrents to **Public Benefits** such as education and social services as a means to curb immigration to Texas.* Most immigrants are not eligible for public benefits. Policy deterrents like denying public services are not effective and often penalize those who need it most, poor U.S. citizens and children.

*Utilize the **educational system** to monitor immigration. **Schools are sacred places** that are built on a nurturing, trusting and protective environment for children. **Kids are being put in harms way** by bad policies that require schools to report the number of undocumented students thus not making schools safe for kids and families.*

*Utilize **criminalization mechanisms** to socially and economically isolate immigrants in efforts to deter immigrants to Texas.* No legislation can assist in the determination of individuals who are legal but instead opens it up to human error and prejudice.

Employer Sanctions Bills-

◆ HB 48 (Riddle), HB 658 (J.Jackson)

◆ SB 357 (Patrick, Dan)

Public Benefits Bills-

◆ HB 50 (Riddle) Higher Education

◆ HB 255 (Berman) Higher Education- prohibit admission

◆ HB 261 (Berman)/SB358 (Patrick, Dan) / HB404 (Harless) Agency Cooperation

◆ HB 262 (Berman) K-12 Education

◆ HB 266 (Berman) Prohibit Public Benefits

◆ HB 267 (Zerwas) Reporting of Public Benefits

◆ HB 276, 1436 (Benefits)

◆ HB1630(Naishtat) Denying SCHIP

Criminalization Bills-

◆ HB 50 (Riddle)/ SB357 (Patrick, Dan) Criminal Trespassing

◆ HB 253,390,1033 (English Only)

◆ HJR 27,32 (Berman) English

These types of legislation threatens civil rights and opens the state and local governments to countless lawsuits by Texans. Japanese concentration camps are a dark part of U.S. history and have no place in today's society. HB254 seeks to bring back similar camps by restricting immigrants to reside in certain geographic areas in Texas known as Sanctuary Cities.

Unfunded mandates place additional burdens on state agencies by asking them to do the work of the federal government. Asking state agencies with limited resources to act as immigration enforcement is the **most ineffective and expensive means to deter immigrants**. Economic sustainability of Texas is interdependent on our bi-cultural heritage and the economic contribution of immigrants, as reported in a 2006 Report by the State Comptroller. Without the economic contribution of immigrants, Texas would be in a more dire economic situation by losing \$17.7 billion to the Texas gross state product.

We look forward to a partnership that will improve the *bienestar* of our community and Texas as a whole. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me or Ms. Amy Casso, Policy Analyst, at (210) 208-9494.

Respectfully submitted,

Juan H. Flores

Juan H. Flores, M.U.P.
Executive Director