



League of United Latin  
American Citizens  
of Kansas

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House Federal and State Affairs  
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Thank You Chairman Siegfried and members of the committee for this opportunity to share information that may be useful to you as you deliberate on this matter before us today.

My name is Elias L. Garcia, I am the State Director of the Kansas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). LULAC is the oldest civil rights organization in the country and represents over 1000 councils throughout the United States, including five in Kansas.

Members of the committee, I was present at last Wednesday's committee meeting and like you heard the briefing offered by our Sec. of State in which he gave a summary of all the bills and initiatives he was promoting. His list included actions A to I that in his opinion, states may take in an effort to discourage illegal immigration in Kansas. We heard his message, but despite his opinions, LULAC's message to Mr. Kobach and indeed to the honorable members of this committee is that comprehensive immigration reform is no longer a matter of IF, but WHEN. The time has come to move on from legislative initiatives based on an approach of exclusion and punishment towards immigrants, to one of affording us the dignity and respect we deserve as full productive members of our society.

All the actions included in the Sec of States' list were not new or innovative, just more of the same that has been the cornerstones of Mr. Kobachs career building agenda for approximately the last ten years. Many, if not all, of these proposed actions offered by the Sec. of State have been introduced and debated in past Kansas legislatures and the fact is that were not embraced by majorities in either the Kansas House or Senate. A primary example is the Student Immigrant Tuition Bill Mr. Kobach continues to insist is contrary to federal law. However we all know that in in 2004, it was he who lobbied on behalf defeating this bill, it was he who appealed and argued this case before the Kansas Supreme Court, and it is he who refuses to accept the findings of the high court. Its time to move on.

Over this past weekend, in preparation for this briefing, I was in contact with Latino advocates and colleagues in the D.C. area, including our LULAC National President, Brent Wilkes, and asked, when is comprehensive immigration reform going to pass? The unanimous response was that it will be passed by the end of spring, beginning of summer. The reason for this optimism is that there is unprecedented bi-partisan support for passage of national comprehensive immigration reform. There is little resistance from either side of the isle to make this the law of the land, so, why should we in Kansas be about the business of debating the same old anti-immigrant initiatives that in a few months will all be MOOT!

From government to business to politics to Joe Public, we Hispanics/Latinos, especially our Latino undocumented immigrants, have been defined, labeled, stigmatized, demonized, ostracized, disrespected and beat-on like a Pinata! Some have gone as far as to portray us as terrorists, criminals,

and even suggesting that Latino immigrants deserve the same treatment as feral hogs. This is our reality, and while we particularly do not appreciate it, Hispanics/Latinos (especially Latino immigrants) live with it. Even so, its time to move on.

Latinos are a body of 50 million individuals (add another 11.2 undocumented families) rooted in 22 different countries connected by language, customs, food, belief in God, love for our families, and our dreams of a better future for our children. We are one Hispanic/Latino body with two distinct personalities, a U.S. native-born persona and the other an immigrant persona comprised of 11 million undocumented immigrant families. Like all Americans, we have dreams. We dream that one day soon, all Latinos will be embraced as full partners in American society and afforded dignity and respect that all deserve

At the crossroads of mutual interests you will find progress. As a society, we all must work towards our American progress, a progress includes shifting from an approach of exclusion and punishment towards immigrants to a focus of inclusion and realizing a full societal incorporation and first-class citizenship for all Latino immigrants. In a few short months, we will get past those crossroads and our society will come to grips with embracing us and valuing the total Hispanic and Latino community (including our immigrant community) as equals.

At the end of the day, leaders from all sides of the isle will understand that its never been about liking us, or us liking you back. Its about affording us dignity and Respect. Its about facing reality. Only then will our American Society will be enabled and prepared for full economic growth and progress. Only then will all our dreams and our American reality be fully realized. Thank you..